

ADOLESCENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AT A SECONDARY  
SCHOOL IN GAUTENG

by

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that, *Adolescents' Perspectives of Discipline Problems at a Secondary School in Gauteng* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

Ms D. De Atouguia

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Date

### III

#### **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to all the special characters that we as teachers will never forget; to the teachers who selflessly give of themselves for the benefit of their learners and to the families of these teachers who understand and support their calling.

## IV

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
DoE	Department of Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SACE	South African Council of Educators
UNISA	University of South Africa

**ABSTRACT**

Problem behaviours amongst adolescent learners continue to affect the goals of effective education. The current study sought to investigate adolescents' perspectives of discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng.

A mixed method research design was followed during which questionnaires, focus groups and interviews directed the empirical investigation. The findings revealed two areas for addressing and improving the discipline problems of the secondary school, namely improving extrinsic factors and improving the current discipline system.

Based on the findings, it was suggested that the school encourage greater parent involvement and improve parent-teacher communication. Creating a positive school identity and developing teachers further was proposed.

An improved discipline system based on a positive learning approach was recommended. This included clarifying the discipline system to all role players, standardising discipline procedures throughout the school and improving follow up procedures regarding learner discipline.

**KEYWORDS**

Adolescents; behaviour problems; learner perceptions; discipline system; intrinsic factors; extrinsic factors; discipline strategies; discipline approach; code of conduct; punishment effects of poor discipline

# CHAPTER ONE-

## INTRODUCTION, ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

---

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Deviant and disruptive learner behaviour is anything but a recent issue; the most difficult task an educator has faced is dealing with the disrespect and rowdy behaviour of learners (Danforth & Smith, 2005:13; Dodge, 2011:63). With the constant changes that occur in society it is difficult to find a one-size-fits-all approach to discipline that stands the test of time (Marais & Meier, 2010:44; Tungata, 2006:30). It does not take intensive research to tell us that discipline in school is different today than it was in the 1950s, but it does take some investigation to find out why.

What has changed dramatically over time are the environments which children are exposed to, the kinds of trouble manifesting in schools, the school pressures children have to face and the ways that schools and professionals have viewed these problems (Danforth & Smith, 2005:13). So what is discipline?

Learners with behaviour problems are described as those who behave in ways impinging on another's right to learn, instigating offtask behaviour and those who violate societal norms and rules (Danforth & Smith, 2005:245; Rosenberg, Wilson, Moheady & Sindel, 1997: 59; Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:3). In this light, discipline in a school is said to be the practice of training people to obey rules and societal norms. Discipline is "a code of controlled behaviour, the orderly management and control of educational practices" (Egwuonwu, 2008:2). There are different ways of maintaining discipline (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013). Each way approaches behaviour problems from a different perspective with the aim of helping to rectify such behaviour.

Behaviourists believe that all behaviour is a learnt response and thus poor conduct can be replaced or modified by learning new, more appropriate responses. This traditional approach identifies a relationship between antecedent, behaviour and consequence (Danforth & Smith, 2005:61; Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:4). In this approach the poor behaviour is minimised by conditioning a new response or by the extinction of the inappropriate response (Mcnamara, 2012:52; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:37; Tungata, 2006:20).

Traditionally behaviourists used corporal punishment, suspension and exclusion as consequences to minimise inappropriate behaviour, which in hindsight seem to blame the victim and create negative feelings towards the system (Kerr & Nelson, 1989:7; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008: 18; Keynes, 1997:40; Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:4). The results of these methods were immediate but not permanent.

The psychodynamic/constructivist approach follows the view that behaviour problems are the result of poor psychosocial skills, which is in line with transactional analysis, Freud's psychosexual development theory, Erikson's psychosocial development theory (Martin & Loomis, 2013:83), and Piaget's cognitive learning model (Rosenberg et al. 1997:9; Danforth & Smith, 2005:37; Martin & Loomis, 2013:79). This approach states that new meanings and resolutions are constructed in relation to the existing meaning in a social context and the environment. Learning is an ongoing active process of assimilation and accommodation and it is the change in the cognitive schema that results in long-term behavioural change and equilibrium (Danforth & Smith, 2005:36, 57; Sprick, 2013:258). This theory has many branches all of which aim to modify the inappropriate behaviour in a positive learning environment.

Such approaches include the Adlerian approach which attempts to understand the context of the poor behaviour in order to be proactive (Martin & Loomis, 2013:62; Marais & Meier, 2010:42; Compas, Horwell, Phares, Williams & Giunta, 1989:736). The positive approach works on the principle of reciprocated respect (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:37; Samuels, 2010).



The student-centred approach helps learners to take ownership of their environment by learning to self-regulate and being aware of the boundaries and expectations (Martin & Loomis, 2013:62; Tungata, 2006:26; Unity Lab, 2011; Chen, 2008:7).

The question about the most successful approach remains. Educators, parents, learners and theorists have enormously varied viewpoints about school discipline (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:271) all of which should be considered when evaluating a school system (Maphosa, 2011:245). In a study conducted by Tungata (2006), in the Mthatha District, South Africa, it was found that learners disagree with educators, parents and literature regarding the causes of poor discipline as well as the effectiveness of certain behaviour management strategies. In another study conducted by Yuanshan, Chang and Youyan (2011) on Singapore learners, and a study conducted by Maphosa (2011:244) the findings were similar. From this it can be seen that some educators' preferred strategies fail to make a lasting change in learner behaviour, which necessitates the need for the learner's perspective to be considered. Learners' views should be taken into account since the goal of discipline is to manage and change their poor behaviour (Yuanshan et al. 2011:2).

According to Tungata (2006:1), Chepkilot and Kiprop (2011:270), Yuanshan et al. (2011:1), Maphosa (2011:245) and Clark (2001:1) the incidence of disruptive behaviour in schools is becoming more and more of a challenge for educators. However, even amongst educational stakeholders, there seems to be disagreement about what discipline entails, what constitutes disruptive behaviour and which strategies are best in terms of dealing with undisciplined learners.

In an Australian study conducted by their Department of Education, Science and Training (2005: vii) most parents felt that issues such as manners, attendance, bullying and drug use amongst others were poorly dealt with by schools. These are also some of the behaviour problems cited in the studies by Tungata (2006), Maphosa (2011) and Yuanshan et al. (2011) and some of the problems that in the researcher's opinion, we currently experience in South African schools. It is thus the purpose of this study to investigate, from the learners' perspective, viable options to maintain discipline in schools to ensure effective teaching and learning takes place.

## 1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

### 1.2.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

The secondary school in Gauteng which was under study is an English multiracial, co-ed, ex-model C school in the Alberton area, south of Johannesburg. For many years it has been one of the only schools whose only selection criterion is that the learners reside in the rather large feeder area. This means that the learners come from a diversity of backgrounds and environments ranging from the more affluent Meyersdal area to Albertsdale and Mayberry Park. It is an area which houses three immediate feeder primary schools.

This secondary school is known for its excellence in academics, but also partakes in sports and cultural events with some success. Academics are a priority at the secondary school as can be seen from their impressive matric pass rate over the years and the district awards received by the educators.

The researcher had been a learner (1997-2001) and an educator (2002-2012) at this secondary school for the last fifteen years, during which time the researcher observed many changes in the ethos of learners as well as the governance (three principals) and discipline of the school. Discipline problems seem to be on the rise in the researcher's opinion, despite the staff's efforts to maintain a disciplined school of high standards and quality education.

This has led the researcher to believe that as educators we are not getting to the crux of the matter and that the learners' perspective needs to be taken into account with regards to the analysis, modification and implementation of discipline policies. The school has undergone new management with the retirement of the principal in July of 2011 and the researcher feels that now would be a good time to conduct this study and hopefully give some insight as to a way forward.

### 1.2.2 INVESTIGATION OF THE PROBLEM

This secondary school in Gauteng has been one of the top achieving schools in Ekurhuleni district 16 for over a decade. The staff at the secondary school is fully aware that behaviour problems are rapidly getting out of control and that the school needs to adapt its policies in order to maintain its high standards of education.

Discipline problems are not unique to this school; many educators in different schools have echoed the frustrations of ineffective school policies and traditional behavioural methods (Mcnamara, 2012:52; Advancement Project, 2010:2; Danforth & Smith, 2005:73; Kerr & Nelson, 1989:7). It seems that negative perceptions of secondary schools are carried not only by educators, but learners and their parents too (Van Der Wolf, Lippens and Huizenga, 1998: 1; Maphosa, 2011:241-248; McNamara, 2012:52).

This secondary school seems to follow the traditional behaviourist approach more so than the constructivist approach, whereby detention, suspension and exclusion are still consequences to poor behaviour (Kerr & Nelson, 1989:7; McNamara, 2012:52). However with the implementation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 and the Children's Act, Act 38 of 2005 corporal punishment is no longer practiced and it seems that there is a move towards a combination of the two approaches (behaviourist and constructivist) with the rise of inclusive education and school-based support teams (Sprick, 2013:266; Martin & Loomis, 2013:58-62).

This secondary school has its own code of conduct (Appendix iv) which describes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as well as the consequences for infringing various rules. It also lays out the procedure to be followed in disciplinary matters. Learners have a summarised version printed in their homework diaries which are issued to them at the start of each year. Parents are required to sign this code. At the back of the homework diary is space for the educator to sign demerits for any infringement of the rules. In this way parents are kept aware of the difficulties their children are experiencing at school.

Educators at the school seem to face various discipline problems ranging in seriousness and frequency. As has been mentioned above, problems relating to work ethic, classroom disruption and mutual respect seem to be the most frequent infractions with fighting, vandalism and gang activity occurring far less frequently.

Tungata (2006:16) and Yuanshan et al. (2011:4) provide various alternative forms of disciplining learners, such as involving parents, removing privileges, time outs, reward and punishment, role modelling, detention, manual work, empathetic relationship, demerits, humour, verbal and non-verbal interventions, suspension or expulsion. The school educators employ various techniques, but as a school a system of demerits, detentions and suspensions prevails. Each educator has his/her own method of classroom discipline; some seem to manage their classes more successfully than others. This will be investigated in more detail in Chapter 2.

This research tends to approach the problem by investigating the adolescents' perspectives of the current disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng. It is anticipated that the results of this research may offer some insight into the discipline problems that this school faces and possible solutions which may be implemented in the future.

### 1.2.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The specific research question addressed by this study investigates: "What the adolescents' perspectives of the discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng?"

## 1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

### 1.3.1 GENERAL AIMS

The problem that this secondary school seems to be experiencing is that of an ineffective disciplinary system. Much of the research on discipline has included various

theories and approaches to classroom management as well as the educator and parent perspectives of schooling and behaviour problems. For this reason this study will focus on the disciplinary system from the learner's perspective.

What are adolescents' perspectives of discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng?

The following sub-questions will be investigated:

- What do learners suggest as causative factors for the manifestation of poor behaviour?
- How do learners perceive the current disciplinary problems at a secondary school in Gauteng?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng as perceived by the learners?
- What improvements to the disciplinary system do the learners suggest?

### 1.3.2 SPECIFIC AIMS

The purpose of this study is to develop an awareness of how the current disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng is perceived by learners, by conducting an empirical investigation and making reference to the relevant literature. In so doing the following objectives can be identified:

- Create an awareness of possible reasons for the manifestation of poor behaviour according to learners.
- Develop an awareness of how the current disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng is perceived by learners.
- Report on the weaknesses or shortfalls of the disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng as perceived by the learners.
- Report on possible improvements to the disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng that may be implemented, as suggested by the learners.

### 1.3.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study involved a literature study which included an overview of the relevant published and unpublished materials relating to the subject of discipline in secondary schools on a national and international level (Chimhenga, 2002:11). This included sources such as books, government documents, articles, newspapers, journals and dissertations.

The research provided insight into educational stakeholders' current views on discipline in schools, the manifestation of behaviour problems, factors which influence such behaviour and possible solutions or different approaches to dealing with learners with behaviour problems.

Sources dealing with theoretical models of child development enabled the researcher to understand adolescents and their behaviour more effectively and helped identify more successful strategies to dealing with adolescents' behaviour (Chimhenga, 2002:11).

The research findings enabled the researcher to compare empirical findings in a secondary school in Gauteng with the research findings of other schools and in so doing gain insight into how others have managed behaviour problems.

### 1.3.4 EMPIRICAL STUDY

This research involved an empirical study at a secondary school in Gauteng regarding the perception of the discipline system, downfalls and possible improvements and the factors contributing to the manifestation of behaviour problems.

Questionnaires consisting of both closed and open questions were completed by the Grade 10 learners regarding causative factors, methods of discipline and possible solutions.

Focus groups held with the representative council of learners (RCL) added to the knowledge gained from the questionnaires and enabled the researcher to determine the causative factors and possible solutions to behaviour problems as suggested by the learners themselves.

An interview was conducted with the principal to get an overview of the ethos of the school. It was envisaged that the interview would shed light on the discipline system and types of problems the school faced and that this could be used as a comparison to the learner's perspective.

## 1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

Research can be defined as a search for knowledge or as any systematic investigation whereby a particular phenomenon in reality is studied objectively in order to establish a valid understanding of the phenomenon (Tuckman & Harper, 2012:3).

### 1.4.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Knowledge is personally experienced and can have multiple interpretations. For this reason an anti-positivist paradigm was chosen. Anti-positivism does not establish a specific relationship amongst components but rather emphasises human interaction within a phenomenon and suggests a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to social enquiry (Dash, 2005:2; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:388). Since this study has focused on the learner's perspective of discipline at a secondary school in Gauteng it is only apt that the research follows the anti-positivist paradigm.

### 1.4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The mixed approach to research has been employed with the focus of a qualitative nature (Bryman, 2012:627). The qualitative approach has been taken as the focus for this research as it emphasises how the learners themselves experience the current disciplinary procedures at a secondary school in Gauteng and what they perceive to be possible future improvements to the system. This focus involves becoming immersed in the life worlds of the participants.

Phenomenology collects data on how an individual makes sense out of a particular experience or situation, in this case discipline at a secondary school in Gauteng. This approach aims to transform a lived experience into a description by understanding one's perspective of one's everyday lived experience within the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:26; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005:1; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:387). The research problem deals with the social reality of discipline as perceived and experienced by the individual learner and not a relationship of cause and effect.

### 1.4.3 DATA COLLECTION

#### 1.4.3.1 BACKGROUND

The background to this study is an overview of the available literature in journals, books, official documents and educational policies in order to explore the work of other researchers on the phenomenon of discipline in secondary schools particularly as it relates to the current disciplinary system (Bryman, 2012:97) of a secondary school in Gauteng.

#### 1.4.3.2 ENTRY

Documents and artefact collections are tangible manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions and values. It is a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data with little or no reciprocity between the researcher and the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:356; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:243).

#### 1.4.3.3 EXPLORATION

Questionnaires are the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects. They ask all subjects the same questions and can ensure anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:194; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:243, 271). In order to overcome the disadvantages of closed questions both structured and open questions were used in this questionnaire.



Certain questions were given predetermined responses from which to choose as is typical of a structured question, but participants were also given the opportunity to motivate the response, typical of an open question format (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 197; Bryman, 2012:468).

#### 1.4.3.4 CLOSURE

Focus groups are a highly useful flexible technique for exploratory research that can be a starting point for more comprehensive quantitative research (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005:560; Bryman, 2012:503). Focus groups are a qualitative data collection method effective in helping researchers learn the social norms of a community or subgroup, as well as the range of perspectives that exist within that community or subgroup (Mack et al. 2005:52; Bryman, 2012:503).

In-depth interviewing involves open response questions to obtain data of participant meanings, how individuals conceive their world and how they plan to make sense of important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:274). Interviews were used in order to gain information from key role players on the perception of the discipline system.

Based on the results obtained from the research study a comprehensive report was drawn up as feedback and submitted to the executive staff, the school governing body and the representative council of learners.

#### 1.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an ongoing process which literally means to take apart words, sentences and paragraphs, which is an important act in the research project in order to make sense of, interpret and theorise data (Bryman, 2012:567; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364; Egwuonwu, 2008:59).

#### 1.4.5 SAMPLING

Purposive sampling will be used in this study initially in order to obtain the deepest possible understanding of the discipline system at a secondary school in Gauteng from a learner perspective. Thereafter random sampling of the initial group will be used. Random sampling is “the arbitrary selection of people to be part of a sample because they are thought to be representative of the population studied” (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005:104).

#### 1.4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher is responsible for ensuring the ethical quality of the inquiry and thus had an obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of the research (Egwuonwu, 2008:61). The following ethical considerations were taken into account for this research study: (Alderson & Morrow, 2011:31-39; Mack et al. 2005:54; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334):

- Obtained approval for the research to be conducted from the school where the research was conducted as well as the Department of Education.
- Obtained ethical clearance from UNISA's ethics committee.
- Obtained informed consent from the research participants.
- Clearly stated the aims, objectives and voluntary nature of the study as well as possible benefits and risks involved to the individual and the school at large.
- Informed participants of confidentiality and the limits thereof.

#### 1.4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure trustworthiness in-depth and focus group interviews were used as well as source documents and statistical data to increase the validity and reliability of methods as a form of triangulation. Triangulation increases the accuracy of interpretation and confirms that data obtained is not due to chance or circumstances (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:374).

Trustworthy data should be selected by assessing solicited versus unsolicited data, subtle influences amongst the participants, specific versus vague statements and accuracy of the sources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 374). Trustworthiness implies credibility, confidence in the findings, transferability, that results can be generalised, dependability, findings are consistent; conformability, and that findings can be confirmed by others' research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:374; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:126). The results from this study adhered to all these criteria apart from being generalisable to other situations.

## 1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

### 1.5.1 ADOLESCENT

Adolescence refers to the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood and is a transition period said to occur between the ages of twelve and eighteen (Mannheim, 2011:2; healthychildren.org, 2013; Hornby, 2000:315).

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) adolescence can be divided into two stages. Puberty is from twelve to fourteen years of age, and is characterised by dramatic physical changes which prepare the body for sexual maturity. From fifteen to eighteen years development is less dramatic, as teenagers' physical development levels out and their personality and identity develop. This includes an emotional and cognitive adjustment as adolescents struggle for their independence (Earl, Hargreaves & Ryan, 2013:12).

Adolescence is a transitional period characterised by physical, cognitive and socio-affective changes during which one matures (Wolfolk, 2007: 65; Manning & Bucher, 2012: 28-50; healthychildren.org, 2013; Center for disease control and prevention, 2012). Morgan and Huebner (2009:370) divide these changes into physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes. Physical body changes mark the start of puberty and result in teenagers being very self-conscious as their bodies change (Mannheim, 2011:2).

During this stage one cognitively develops abstract thought, hypothetical deduction, reasoning and propositional thought which are essential for the formulation of values and attitudes necessary for effective participation in society (Coleman, 1986:233; Mannheim, 2011:2; Earl et al. 2013:8). Psychosocially one develops one's own identity, autonomy, intimacy and sexuality (Morgan & Huebner, 2009:371; Earl et al. 2013:10).

This can be quite a turbulent phase during which adolescents are vulnerable to peer pressure, often reject adult support and control, partake in risky and/or rebellious behaviour and search to find their own identity which is why an effective disciplinary system is essential in secondary schools (Millei, Griffiths, Parks & Raby, 2010:37; Coleman, 1986:233).

Discipline and the teaching of self-discipline are thus imperative for this age group as a skill to be carried into the future (Manning & Bucher, 2012:12). For this research study Grade 10 learners, aged fifteen to seventeen, were selected as it was felt that they would have sufficient knowledge of the discipline system and that they are at a stage where they can still benefit from the implementation of a more effective system. However, in this study, *adolescent* refers to any child between the ages of twelve to eighteen who is going through physical, cognitive or psychosocial changes in development (Earl et al. 2013:8).

### 1.5.2 BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

Educators have differing perceptions of incidents of inappropriate behaviour (Wolpe, 2012:20; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:2). One educator might see a particular behaviour as deviant and unacceptable, another as a normal reaction to intolerable stress. For this reason there does not seem to be a clear definition of what problematic behaviours entail, but rather descriptions and examples of how learners behave inappropriately under different circumstances (Wolpe, 2012:29; Lund, 1996:21; Marais & Meier, 2011:42).

Such descriptions include assault, bullying, rowdiness, disrespect, vandalism, gang activity, problems of order and control, talking and hindering (Gorgueiro, 2008:4). Sharpe (2012:2) concurs and adds the following as behaviour problems: abusive language, arson, intimidation, burglary, cheating, class disruptions, defiance, forgery, gambling, harassment, hazing, public displays of affection, extortion, bunking, tardiness, and trespassing, amongst others. De Witt and Lessing (2013:2), Wolpe (2012:27) and Chepkilot and Kiprop (2011) mention some but not all of the above as discipline problems, which implies that different regions, even different schools, experience different problems in terms of discipline. This may illustrate why, as Marais and Meier (2011:42) state, there is no clear definition of what behaviour problems entail.

According to Marais and Meier (2011:42) disruptive behaviour is inappropriate behaviour which leads to discipline problems that affect the rights of learners to feel safe and respected. Waterville Central School District (2012:32) defines behaviour problems in their code of conduct as any learner less than twenty one years of age who substantially interferes with the educational process or interferes with the educator's authority over the class.

For the purpose of this study we will follow the definition of problem behaviours as the inappropriate behaviour which interferes with the rights of others, and with the teaching and learning process which makes learning and effective instruction difficult (Marais & Meier, 2011:42; Waterville Central School District, 2012:32). This includes many of the behaviour examples given above such as disrespect and noncompliance (Bobrow, 2002:1).

### 1.5.3 CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct is a legal prerequisite for schools which reflects the democratic principles in South African education (Western Cape Government, 2014). The code of conduct is formulated by each individual school but, may not contradict the principles laid down in documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, the National Education Policy Act No 27 of 1996, the South African

Schools Act No 84 of 1996, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Department of Education, 2012:5).

The code of conduct is aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality learning process (Egwuonwu, 2008: 4; Sharpe, 2012:7). It aims to create a sense of oneness despite differences, and to provide a common perspective towards the school vision of behaviour and the school image (Glenn, 2012; Wolpe, 2012:23). It is a reference point for behaviour analysis in the management of discipline for educators and is an alternative to corporal punishment (Western Cape Government, 2014; Sharpe, 2012:7). The code sets up a framework of expectations and consequences for misbehaviour so that all parties concerned have clarity regarding issues of discipline (Department of Education, 2012: ii, Western Cape Government 2014; Glenn, 2012).

A code of conduct is a collection of a number of binding rules and principles which reflect certain moral standards, ethics, principles, values and standards of conduct of the school (Egwuonwu, 2008: 9; Wolpe, 2012:20). It is meant to guide learner behaviour by explaining the expectations of the learners and outlining specific rules and regulations in order to regulate behaviour, acts, undesirable conduct and omissions of learners in a school situation (Egwuonwu, 2008: 9; Millei et al. 2010:44; Waterville Central School District, 2012:33; Glenn, 2012).

A code of conduct should educate learners and parents about learners' expected behaviour and thus prescribes learner behaviour (Millei et al. 2010:32; Wolpe, 2012:20; Western Cape Government, 2014). The code also defines the rights and responsibilities of all parties concerned (Sharpe, 2012:8; Waterville Central School District, 2012:32).

Responsibility is the cornerstone of most codes of conduct and implies self-discipline; however this philosophy is seldom really reflected in the rules and implementation of the code of conduct (Wolpe, 2012:29; Millei et al. 2010:32).

A code of conduct typically comprises the following (Department of Education, 2012:21; Millei et al. 2010:32; Sharpe, 2012:8; Waterville Central School District, 2012:35):

- The school's values, vision and mission statement.
- The aim of the code of conduct.
- The responsibilities of educators and parents.
- The school rules, regulations and provisions.
- Infringements, jurisdiction and scope.
- The rights and responsibilities of learners.
- A description of positive learner behaviour as well as misconduct.
- Levels of indiscipline and corrective measures to be applied on each level.
- Circumstances where the code of conduct will apply.
- Possible punishment, appropriate measures and responses.
- Rules and procedures to be followed in case of disciplinary proceedings and appeals.
- Principles dealing with allegations of criminal conduct of learners.

#### 1.5.4 DISCIPLINE

The word discipline seems to have multiple meanings (Millei et al. 2010:37; Wolpe, 2012:20). However, punishment and discipline are not synonymous (Childline South Africa, 2012; Bear, 2012:2). Discipline can be defined as the practice of training people to obey rules and orders, and punishing them if they refuse to obey the rules (Hornby, 2000: 330; Yahaya, 2009; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:270).

Discipline upholds moral values and is the regulation and maintenance of order (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:271; LeeFon, Jacobs, Le Roux, & De Wet, 2013:6; Wolpe, 2012:20). Chepkilot and Kiprop (2011:271) further state that discipline is educating one to acquire a desired behaviour, keeps a balance between rights and responsibilities resulting in social order and helps to teach self-control.

LeeFon et al. (2013:6) and Millei et al. (2010:37) say discipline is often seen as a synonym for control, self-regulation, creating and/or maintaining order. This may imply

the practice of punishment, reward and regulation which are designed to promote compliance and submission (Millei et al. 2010:37; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272). Corporal punishment may no longer be used and other alternatives have replaced this approach to discipline (Childline South Africa, 2012; Bowen, 2010:3; Bear, 2012:14).

The aim of discipline is to enable one to take ownership and to be accountable for one's behaviour (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272; Wolpe, 2012:20; Millei et al. 2010:38). It is the ability to continue on a course of action despite distractions and confusion, a method of training your body or mind or of controlling your behaviour or the way you live, or work or to make yourself do things that you believe you should do (Hornby, 2000:330; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272; LeeFon et al. 2013:6). Egwuonwu, (2008:2) sees discipline as a set of rules and punishment applied in order to keep learners on task, with the ultimate aim of discipline as management and control.

These authors all have similar ideas and yet write from a broad context of differing perspectives. For the purpose of this study, discipline will be referred to as the training of learners, by means of appropriate teaching, rules and procedures, in such a way as to promote orderly participation in education which does not infringe on the right of others.

#### 1.5.5 DISCIPLINE APPROACHES

Discipline practices typically reflect an imbalance of political power between educators and learners (Porter, 2007:5; Bowen, 2010:3). During apartheid Christian Education South Africa regarded the use of corporal punishment as the most authentic approach to discipline but this approach to discipline has since been outlawed by the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act (Act 33 of 1997) and new approaches have since then been implemented with some success (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:5-7; Bear, 2012:12; Egwuonwu, 2008:2; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011).

Porter (2007:18) categorises these approaches on a continuum of power sharing, between an authoritative position, where educators exercise control over learners, to an egalitarian position where educators and learners share equal power. Unity Lab (2011)



and Sharpe (2012:8) agree that corporal punishment and misuse of power has more negative effects and that positive discipline should be used instead. Such approaches, according to Kourkoutas and Wolhuter (2013:5-7), Bear (2012:82), Porter (2007:20) and Unity Lab (2011), include:

- Assertive discipline, where educators impose order and compliance by using positive and negative consequences.
- Applied behaviour analysis, where behaviour is governed by consequence, reward or punishment in order to stop bad behaviour.
- Cognitive behaviourism, whereby the learner's values, emotions, thoughts, social settings and behaviour are corrected by consequence.
- Neo-Adlerian theory, which prevents learner discouragement by creating cooperative relationships. Learners are taught to meet their needs in an appropriate manner.
- Humanism, which is actively constructing understanding. The educator facilitates the learning of new knowledge using no rewards or punishment, only learning.

Millei et al. (2010: 44-52); Schwarz (2011:A14) refer to three systems of discipline commonly used in schools:

- Escalating consequences, whereby consequences for a given rule violation increase in severity with repeated violations.
- Suspension, which excludes the learner from the classroom and peer interactions either by enforcing home suspension or in-school suspension.
- Social responsibility assessments, is a category/learning area with its own set of criteria, which is evaluated and reported as is academic assessment.

For the most part the secondary school in Gauteng investigated in this study follows a behaviourist approach. The school's disciplinary code and policies are in line with the principles of an applied behaviour analysis approach to discipline, although there are some staff who follow a more assertive approach and some who attempt to follow a more constructivist approach.

The school's code of conduct seems to follow the system of escalating consequences and uses suspension for serious infractions of the rules. During this study both the discipline approach and system was investigated and their effectiveness in terms of creating a disciplined environment assessed.

#### 1.5.6 LEARNERS

Learning is a lifelong process of transforming information and experience into knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes (Cobb, 2009; Department of Education, 2012; Merriam -Webster, 2012). The Department of Education (2012) states that the main reason for schooling is to develop learners academically, socially and culturally.

A learner can be defined as a person who is finding out about a subject or developing a skill by studying, practicing or being taught (Merriam- Webster, 2012).

From this it can be seen that there is no limitation on the age or environment in which learning can take place. However, for the purpose of this study, a learner is referred to as one who is currently undertaking to learn in a formal educational setting. Formal educational setting refers to schooling from reception year (Grade R) to matric (Grade 12) (DoE 2012).

### 1.6 RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Chapter one: Introductory orientation

This chapter highlights the background study, problem formulation, aims and objectives of the research, research design and methodology.

Chapter two: The effects of discipline on adolescent development

Chapter two consists of a literature study looking at the theoretical models of human behaviour and normal developmental patterns in adolescents, as well as the causative

factors of behaviour problems in adolescents and the effects of an ineffective discipline system on an adolescent. Alternatives to the current discipline practices considered.

#### Chapter three: Research design

This chapter delineates the research methodology used in the qualitative study. The research design is discussed as well as the procedure for data collection and analysis.

#### Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of findings

Chapter four gives a narrative account of the research findings. An explanation, analysis and discussion of the findings with quotations from focus group sessions are given. Statistics from questionnaires are presented visually in the form of graphs.

#### Chapter 5: Summary, findings and recommendations

Summaries, conclusions and the integration of the study with literature are discussed. Recommendations based on the results of the study, limitations of the study and suggestions for further study are given.

## 1.7 SUMMARY

Chapter one introduced the research topic and brought to light the need for such an investigation. The methodological approaches that were used in conducting the investigation were considered and a mixed method approach to the empirical study decided on.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the discipline problems experienced by adolescents at a secondary school in Gauteng. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide valuable information with regards to the improvement of the discipline system at the school. If the perception of our schools of becoming a battlefield instead of a tree of knowledge is correct, it becomes imperative that we as stakeholders enforce change in our schools. It is our duty to ensure that our children's basic needs are

provided for and that they receive the education they are entitled to in a safe environment.

This chapter has only provided a brief outline of the research topic. A literature review of recent works on the topic of discipline in schools will be conducted. In chapter two the focus will be on the causative factors of behaviour problems and different approaches to managing challenging behaviours.

# CHAPTER 2-

## UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

“Why do we continue to rely on old ineffective ways to discipline?” (Advantage Press 2002).

For the most part it is because old habits die hard. Yelling, screaming and embarrassing learners along with assigning them detentions and suspensions have been the norm for years, it was the way we ourselves were disciplined but this no longer seems to be sufficient for today’s learners (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:97; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:1). As educators we have worked hard to overcome old and ineffective teaching methods yet we have done little to question or change the way we discipline learners. This stagnancy in discipline hampers the learning experience for learners, especially those who are ill-disciplined (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:2; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:97; Advantage Press, 2002).

In many schools, including the relevant secondary school in Gauteng, much training has been implemented on effective teaching methods and the presentation of the much revised curriculum (South African Council for Educators, 2013:5; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:2). Many educators find though that their curriculum knowledge and effective teaching becomes ineffective due to poor discipline practices (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:97; Putnum, Luiselli, Handler & Jefferson, 2003:511; Kassiem, 2007:2). New educators entering the profession want a recipe for effective discipline, but such a recipe does not exist. Effective discipline is rather a personalised combination of discipline techniques that suit the situation (LeeFon, Jacobs, Le Roux, & De Wet, 2013:5; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:14; Tungata, 2006:11). Experienced educators are

able to read the situation and adapt a suitable strategy with which to deal with it; this however takes practice and requires knowledge and previous experience.

In this literature review we will focus on various facets of discipline. The concept of discipline, the identification of problem behaviour and the causative factors of behavioural problems will be investigated to determine any preventative measures that may be implemented before the poor behaviour ensues (Putnum et al. 2003:511; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:106; Marais & Meier 2010:45). The effects of behavioural problems and the advantages and disadvantages of different discipline methods will be reported on in an attempt to show the importance of good school discipline for all the parties concerned, to motivate effective change and identify areas where problems still exist (Marais & Meier, 2010:45; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:2).

The advantages and disadvantages of various strategies to maintain discipline will be investigated so as to determine more effective ways in which a secondary school in Gauteng could implement discipline procedures (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104; Advantage Press, 2002). These methods will be weighed against each other and the strategy most suited to the secondary school's environment recommended. To conclude I will state which factors and strategies I believe are most influential and appropriate to a secondary school in Gauteng.

## 2.2 BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

Problem behaviour may be seen as merely inappropriate behaviour which can be attributed to disciplinary problems in schools (Putnum et al. 2003:511; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:105; Marais & Meier, 2010:45). This behaviour is said to be a problem, a source of concern, as it is behaviour which is not desired by social or legal norms (Sprick, 2013:305; Costa, 2008:4). These problems affect the fundamental rights of the learner to feel safe and to be treated with respect (Marais & Meier, 2010:52). Discipline is the way in which one manages these behaviour problems (LeeFon et al. 2013:4).

Undisciplined and unruly learners inhibit the achievement of the educator's outcomes by interfering with teaching and learning (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:2; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:105). They infringe on the rights of other learners to learn and to feel psychologically and physically safe (Samuels, 2010; Putnum et al. 2003:511; Marais & Meier, 2010:12). It is often thought that this unacceptable behaviour is a call for help or attention which manifests from various sources in a learner's immediate environment (De Wit & Lessing, 2013:11).

Behaviour problems may range from minor offenses such as verbal interruptions, off-task behaviours, disruptive physical movement, being inattentive to major infractions such as vandalism, violence, disrespect, bullying, stealing and more (Sprick, 2013:305; Marais & Meier, 2010:50). Educators need discipline strategies to deal with them all in a consistent and fair manner (LeeFon et al. 2013:4; Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012).

## 2.3 CAUSATIVE FACTORS OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

Current literature suggests various factors within the learner's life world which may be underlying causes of difficult behaviour. Chimhenga (2002:64), Chepkilot and Kiprop (2011:272) and Lanza, Rhoades, Nix and Greenberg (2010:327) divide these factors into two categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Johnson (2010:313) believes that these behavioural problems experienced in schools are a result of events during earlier development. Ahmad (2011), Laurson, Hafen, Kerr and Stattin (2012:89) and Bowen (2010:1) see these behaviours as a consequence of the learner's environment and socialisation.

### 2.3.1 INTRINSIC FACTORS

Various intrinsic factors may give rise to behaviour problems; such factors are situated within the adolescent learner him/herself, i.e. they are a part of the individual (Fletcher, 2012:8; Chimhenga, 2002:64). These may include brain dysfunction, disabilities,

learning problems, psychological conditions and health problems (Fletcher, 2012:8, Teacherweb, 2007).

#### 2.3.1.1 PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY AFFECTED

Brain dysfunction may result from accidents, infections, tumours or toxic conditions which may occur at birth or after (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:188). These conditions adversely affect the individual and may result in many conditions such as intellectual impairment, cerebral disability, epilepsy and other disabilities (Foster, Brennan, Biglan, Wang & al-Ghaith, 2002:21; Fletcher, 2012:8). Learners affected by brain dysfunctions are often unable to grasp what is expected of them in schooling or even social situations and often come across as immature and social misfits as they do not recognise the social rules and norms (Martin & Loomis, 2013:131).

Physical disability refers to a person who is not able-bodied. This is only regarded as a disability if it prevents one from partaking in regular activities (Kirk, Gallagher, Coleman, & Anastasiow, 2011:108; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:3). As with brain dysfunction it may be incurred at or after birth and includes a wide range of conditions such as blindness, deafness, being paraplegic or an amputee to name a few.

Learners with disabilities often have a negative self-concept due to a poor self-image and are in need of love and attention (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:203; Jessor, 2001:84; Kirk et al. 2011:20). They often feel insecure and isolated which may destroy their intrinsic motivation; extrinsic rewards are thus imperative. Such learners may become obstinate or aggressive in order to defend themselves, others may distance themselves from social interaction, and both lead to socializing problems which increase low self-esteem (Kirk et al. 2011:20; Tungata, 2006:12; Jessor, 2001:87).

#### 2.3.1.2 LEARNING PROBLEMS / DIFFICULTIES

Educators may find that some learners do not seem mentally or physically disabled and yet still struggle to reach the required academic assessment standard of mainstream schooling as required by the curriculum. These learners may experience learning problems (Kirk et al. 2011:108). Some may have difficulties with processing information



where there may be difficulties with visual or auditory perception. These learners find schooling very frustrating and often act out in order to deflect attention from their weaknesses (Fletcher, 2012:1; Bowen, 2010:3; Lanza et al. 2010:327).

These learners may not be mentally challenged as in the section above (2.3.1.1), but they may have lower cognitive functioning or intelligence which means that their learning capabilities are less than that of an average child; they are thus in need of additional assistance (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:203, 149). They are also more inclined to be hypervigilant of perceived threats which may manifest in aggressive or violent outbursts (Lanza et al. 2010:327; Martin & Loomis, 2013:131; Manning & Bucher, 2012:47).

Some adolescent learners develop attention problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which is characterised by a high and immediate demand for the educator's attention and variety of disruptive behaviours (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:149; Kirk et al. 2011:20; Foster et al. 2002:8; Teacherweb, 2007). Deficits in sociocognitive skills such as emotion recognition or problem solving skills may result in learners not being able to foresee the consequences of their behaviour and may even promote negative behaviour (Lanza et al. 2010:327; Bowen, 2010:3). These learners have a misunderstanding of the boundaries, the expectations of themselves and the consequences that will be incurred (Kirk et al. 2011:9, Chen, 2008:2).

#### 2.3.1.3 TEMPERAMENT AND PERSONALITY

Personality refers to the physical, mental, social and emotional characteristics which encompass who one is and make one a unique individual (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:251; Hampson, 2012:3; No Put Downs, Teenager Health and Lifestyle Guide, 2012: Chimhenga, 2002:64).

Temperament is the relatively constant basic disposition which underlies and modulates one's behaviour. It is a behaviour style or a typical way in which one responds to stimuli which includes, for example, the intensity of one's emotions, activities one partakes in and one's sociability (Hampson, 2012:3; Compas, Horwell, Phares, Williams & Giunta, 1989:736; Hamer & Copeland, 2011:13). Temperament patterns act as causative

factors of behavioural problems; thus an unstable environment which affects temperament will adversely affect behaviour (Hampson, 2012:3; Teacherweb, 2007; Chimhenga, 2002:65).

One's attitude affects one's temperament and so it stands to reason that a negative attitude will result in negative behaviour patterns (Manning & Bucher, 2012:39; Hampson, 2012:5). Many learners have been exposed to environments and situations which require constant transformation in order for them to cope. These changes may manifest in negative attitudes, low self-esteem and anxiety (Manning & Bucher, 2012:39; DeWit, Offord, Sanford, Rye, Shain & Wright, 2000:3; Compas et al. 1989:736).

Learners who have developed an attitude of not caring about or wanting an education are likely to defy the education institution (Bowen, 2010:3; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272). Such learners often do not value education and have no goals other than to disrupt the regular course of events.

#### 2.3.1.4 NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADOLESCENT LEARNER

Adolescents are at a very peculiar age as any parent would testify (Manning & Bucher, 2012). According to Erikson's theory of development adolescents are exiting the industry versus inferiority phase and entering the phase of identity versus identity diffusion (Martin & Loomis, 2013:83).

During the industry versus inferiority crisis learners try to become more autonomous and less dependent on the adult figures in their lives (Lesko, 2012:64; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997:218). They master various skills such as reading and writing and become keen collaborators of their culture (Martin & Loomis, 2013:83; Foster et al. 2002: 26).

During the identity versus role confusion crisis earlier certainties are re-examined. Learners are conflicted between their self-image and the role expectations of society (Earl, Hargreaves & Ryan, 2013:68; Pakaslahti, Karajalainen, Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002:140). This often causes adolescent learners to clash with the rules of society and with those who are close to them on their way to finding a suitable role (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:80; Compas et al. 1989:736).

This may involve disowning previous values, culture and beliefs while exploring other alternatives, breaking rules, leaving old friends and making new ones, finding new interests and hobbies and new ways in which to spend time which often causes conflict between parents and their adolescents as well as childhood friends (Lesko, 2012:64; Healthychildren.org, 2013). Parents have less influence and control than in the previous stage as adolescents try to break free and become autonomous (Earl et al. 2013:68; Jessor, 2001:87).

These phases of development seem to blend together rather than to occur separately in clearly defined steps. This adds to the conflict often experienced at this time. At times learners are amenable and the next day they are fighting the norms. This indicates that the adolescent learners are establishing independence, setting new values, questioning the status quo and finding themselves (Martin & Loomis, 2013:83). This may be a period of conflict, often associated with feelings of inadequacy, confusion, guilt and low self-esteem which may result in maladaptive behaviour such as rebellion, acting out and challenging authority and social norms (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:59; Meyer et al. 1997:218).

Adolescent learners often seem to be in a world of their own that nobody else could possibly understand. This is true in a manner of speaking as during this phase learners become incredibly egocentric, feeling as if they are on stage and the world is watching them (Meyer et al. 1997:220; Manning & Bucher, 2012:28). They become self-conscious and judgmental of themselves and others, speak in absolutes and, because they believe that nobody else understands what they are going through, they often feel very isolated and insecure (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:59; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA ,2008:32; healthychildren.org, 2013).

An adolescent's physical attractiveness and rate of physical development will affect their concept of themselves and thus their self-esteem and insecurities (Manning & Bucher, 2012:31). It also plays a role in social acceptance which will affect self-esteem (more about this in section 2.3.1.5). Learners who mature earlier seem to be more socially accepted than those who are late bloomers (Manning & Bucher, 2012:31; Marais & Meier, 2010:23; Jessor, 2001:88).

It stands to reason that learners who have a low self-esteem coupled with the physical awkwardness of this stage often display poor social skills, which leads to being rejected by others (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:32). Being a social outcast will in turn amplify the insecurities and negative self-esteem and so the cycle continues (Marais & Meier, 2010:53). These insecurities may cause learners to become oversensitive which may result in defensive even aggressive behaviour towards a perceived threat, which could be seen as anyone or everyone who does not understand the learner and their needs (healthychildren.org, 2013; Chimhenga, 2002:66).

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs every individual strives to have their needs met in order to reach their full potential (Martin & Loomis, 2013:70). Such needs include physiological support, safety, affiliation and love, self-esteem and self-actualization (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:44). Because self-esteem plays such an important role at this time, learners have a stronger need for a sense of belonging and acceptance, for affirmation of themselves as worthwhile individuals than before (Manning & Bucher, 2012:39; The classroom, 2008; Compas et al. 1989:736). For this reason it is important that learners are made to feel that they are part of the classroom community. Learners who are not treated equally (due to racism, sexism etc.) or who feel as if they do not fit in, will either try even harder to be accepted by the group or they will become despondent and isolate themselves (Earl et al. 2013:68; Marais & Meier, 2010:45). This need for acceptance may lead a learner to anti-social behaviour such as smoking or drugs in order to be part of a particular group or in order to exclude them from a particular group (Manning & Bucher, 2012:209; Meyer et al.1997:218; Jessor, 2001:88).

Recognition is another need which must be fulfilled. Some individuals may be so deprived of recognition and attention at home that they may seek attention in negative ways, believing that even negative attention is better than no attention at all (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:44; Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140). Such learners constantly demand the attention of those around them.

This may be in the form of learnt helplessness, imaginative stories, acting out, bullying, temper tantrums or overeager helpers. Some learners will go as far as challenging a

person (educator or parent) who is in authority in order to gain some sense of recognition, power and control. This is often seen with learners who feel powerless in their surroundings (Earl et al. 2013:68; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:32).

It can thus be said that intrinsic factors are those which occur within the individual and affect the behaviour of the individual either negatively or positively. Such factors include physical or mental disabilities, personality and temperament, development and needs of which one's self-esteem plays a big role. These factors are also affected by the environment in which the adolescent learner functions (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:251; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273; Chimhenga, 2002:67).

### 2.3.2 EXTRINSIC FACTORS

Extrinsic factors are those factors which affect the individual's adjustment to a situation. They are factors which occur outside of the individual and as such are factors which the individual cannot change or control (Chimhenga, 2002:67; Fleming, Catalono, Haggerty & Abbott, 2010:670). Such factors include the home environment, school environment, the community and society in which one functions and the influence of peers (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:106).

The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner describes the dynamic interaction of individuals with their environment and describes how these extrinsic factors influence social development. He explains that all aspects of the environment affect an individual and that in turn the individual affects all aspects of the environment (Derksen, 2010:327). The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner places these extrinsic factors of the environment into different levels namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem in an attempt to understand social influence (Woolfolk, 2007:73).

The microsystem refers to the individual's immediate environment which consists of the family, school, peer and community settings. The relationships within the microsystem are reciprocal, i.e. they flow in both directions (Woolfolk, 2007:73). In this way, a

learner's temperament (intrinsic factor) and behaviour in a classroom will affect the educator's classroom management. Likewise the strategies that an educator uses to maintain classroom discipline will affect the learners' behaviour. Thus much of the adolescent's behaviour is learned within the microsystem (Derksen, 2010:329). Risk factors within the microsystem, such as divorce, negative peer pressure; bullying, poverty and abuse will have a fundamental impact on the adolescent's social development (Woolfolk, 2007:74-80).

The mesosystem is the set of interactions and relationships among all the elements of the microsystem (Woolfolk, 2007:73). In this way the individual, family, school, community and peers are linked and influence each other (Derksen, 2010:330). An adolescent's misbehaviour in class may result in the educator contacting parents. The interaction between the educator and parents will influence the relationship between the parents and learner and likewise the relationship between the learner and educator.

The exosystem describes a larger social system that will affect the individual even though the individual is directly involved in these systems. Such factors may include educator relations with administrators, parents' jobs or community resources (Woolfolk, 2007:73). It is understandable then that a single parent who takes two jobs to provide for the family is under immense pressure. This pressure may affect the parent child relationship which may in turn affect the adolescent negatively.

The macrosystem consists of the larger society. This includes economic patterns, political philosophy, cultural values and laws which will influence the adolescent's belief system, culture, tradition and attitude (Woolfolk, 2007:74). An example of this is the many different traditions amongst South African cultures regarding rites of passage.

The chronosystem refers to the change within the four other systems over time (Ryan, 2001:2), for example, such as the effect on the four other systems resulting from the change in governance of South Africa from Apartheid to democracy.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological development emphasises the importance of understanding the full context of an individual and has motivated the following

investigation into the effect of various extrinsic factors on adolescent behaviour at school.

#### 2.3.2.1 HOME ENVIRONMENT

The family is the most influential system for an individual as it is the primary socialising domain in which learners develop skills of communication, learn cultural and social norms and have their basic needs provided for (Fleming et al. 2010:670). The family should provide basic needs, a safe environment, love, care and acceptance in which individuals have room to develop their full potential. This environment can however have a negative influence on individuals and their behaviour if these needs are not met (Chimhenga, 2002:67; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:11). Many factors contribute to the success or failure of the home environment.

Family demographics refer to the composition of the family itself and encompass various characteristics of the family (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:107). Many studies have been conducted to determine if certain characteristics of a family increase the likelihood of children developing problem behaviour, amongst other things (Johnson, 2010:313).

According to Lanza et al. (2010:315) family structure can influence one's schooling and behaviour. In South Africa the concept of family varies and may not necessarily be limited to biological or even legal family; many African cultures regard the community as family, some cultures include the entire extended family, some grandparents may adopt their children's children and raise them as their own, many parents remarry becoming stepparents, some heterosexual and homosexual couples adopt children and some parents do not marry at all (Jessor, 2001:92; Johnson, 2010:313). In the Lanza et al. (2010:329) study there seems to be evidence that single parent families are at a greater disadvantage than the traditional two parent families. The reasons given for this include fewer resources in terms of income, greater parental stress and less involvement and supervision due to work hours (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:107; Tungata, 2006:11). Single parent families may be families affected by divorce, families who have lost a parent or single parents who never married. This is not to say that single parent families cannot be successful; two parent families can pose just as much of a risk if there is conflict as discussed below.

Economic difficulties also affect the family environment (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:67). In South Africa many citizens are unemployed and or living below the breadline. These financial difficulties put strain on parents to provide the best for their children. In many families both parents work to bring in an income, some have more than one job. Lowered income means fewer educational opportunities; it also means that children are left unsupervised for most of the day while parents are at work. For a troubled adolescent learner this presents a perfect opportunity for mischief (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:11; Jessor, 2001:101).

It may also mean that children need to work in order to help the family get by, leaving little time to focus on learning. For those living in poverty, malnutrition is also a great concern (Jessor, 2001:101; Bergin & Bergin, 2014:67). Not only will malnutrition affect the learning and school behaviour of a child, but overall development as well (Marais & Meier, 2010:52). For this reason some schools (including the secondary school in Gauteng under study) have become involved in feeding schemes.

A study by Lanza et al. (2010) investigated factors such as parental history, parent medical and mental health, parent depression and coping skills. Although no significant findings were made in this study, it does appear from other literature that poor parent health may negatively affect the child and that parents who suffer from psychological disorders and display poor coping skills may be models for this same poor behaviour in their children (Johnson, 2010:313).

Discipline styles can be seen on a continuum, on the one extreme is dictatorship and the other extreme is pushover (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104). Parents should strive to reach a happy medium. This however is often not the case. The parents' style of discipline and amount of involvement will influence the way in which a learner behaves at home and at school (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273).

The concept of discipline is difficult to instil in certain learners who are not disciplined at home as they do not understand that there are consequences for poor behaviour, until they are introduced to discipline at school (Marais & Meier, 2010:48). It may take such learners time to adjust and accept that in a classroom there are rules and procedures to



benefit all parties concerned. During this adjustment period learners act out and display poor behaviour; they will test the system in an attempt to maintain their status quo of indiscipline (Jessor, 2001:101; Wolpe, 2012:36). Often these learners do not see the relevance of rules, which makes it hard for them to comprehend why they should be followed (Ahmad, 2011:2; Marais & Meier, 2010:55). The opposite is also true of learners who have been raised in authoritarian homes, which are characterised by harsh punishment, lack of warmth and understanding and often may resort to an element of corporal punishment (Teacherweb, 2007; Bergin & Bergin, 2014:59). These learners have not experienced freedom and have not had the opportunity to think for themselves; they are governed by rules and procedures and their behaviour is often driven by fear rather than choice (Meyer et al. 1997:268; South African Council for Educators, 2013:6). Trying to discipline learners with such varying backgrounds can become quite a challenging task.

Poor parenting and lack of parental guidance encourages poor behaviour, as inappropriate reactions are not corrected from a young age (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272). Children learn behaviour from observing how authority figures behave (primarily parental figures), and by having negative behaviour corrected, either through corrections and/or through punitive measures (Meyer et al. 1997:280; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:272; Chen, 2008:2). Traditions and value systems are instilled in the home by modelling good behaviour and setting firm boundaries; in this way all concerned are well aware of the expectations of others (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273; Tungata, 2006:11).

A parent's inconsistency, poor behaviour, aggression or violence, lack of respect and bad attitude often result in poor behaviour of the learner (Marais & Meier, 2010:48). Good parenting and a healthy parent-child relationship helps to curb poor learner behaviour as children monitor their own behaviour based on their perception of how their parents will react (Keijsers, Loeber, Branje & Meeus, 2014:5).

A dysfunctional family environment will impact negatively on a learner's behaviour (Sprick, 2013:19; No Put Downs, Teenager Health and Lifestyle Guide, 2012). The incongruent messages between family members may leave the learner feeling tense,

frustrated and confused which may lead to aggressive outbursts (Chimhenga, 2002:67; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:107). Disharmony may stem from many sources within the family structure, amongst which marital conflict is a common source of disunity (Lanza et al. 2010:328; Tungata, 2006:11). Fighting between siblings or between a parent and a sibling, poor communication, poor physical or psychological health of a family member, substance abuse of a family member, long absences of one or more family members, divorce, continuous environmental change such as moving are more examples of sources of problems which may cause a family system to crumble (Jessor, 2001:102; No Put Downs, Teenager Health and Lifestyle Guide, 2012). Very often such a family unit will become closed off and refuse to notice the dysfunction; such families will continue to function dysfunctionally so as to not lose the status quo (Meyer et al. 1997: 282; Manning & Bucher, 2012:236).

The parent-child relationship is very important in a child's development and as such should be handled with care (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:3). This relationship requires a delicate balance of empathy and understanding as well as discipline and punishment and implies that the parent should be an active participant in the learner's life (Fleming et al. 2010:78; Keijsers et al. 2011:4). Parents have a greater influence when children are younger and so the establishment and maintenance of a strong relationship and a healthy perception of the family concept early in the learner's life is vital (Fleming et al. 2010:674).

A healthy parent and child bond and the establishment of involvement earlier in life may help to curb delinquent behaviour during adolescence and may also help to assist a learner during hard times, by providing a strong grounding and a place of safety, inclusivity and acceptance (Keijsers et al. 2011:4). The parent-child relationship seems to be a good predictor of adolescent learner adjustment and coping with changes within and outside of the family environment (Johnson, 2010:317). Thus it can be said that a balanced family encourages the development of a balanced individual (Johnson, 2010:317).

Unfortunately not all learners are exposed to such homes, for many a home is not a pleasant or a safe place. Some learners will experience neglect often resulting in these

learners becoming attention seekers at school (Tungata, 2006:11; Bergin & Bergin, 2014:44; 59 & 149). Others will receive inadequate care from caregivers often because of lower income and limited resources. This may result in malnourishment and the deprivation of learners' most basic needs, which may manifest in various behaviours that may be seen as unacceptable in a school context but understandable in the home context, for example stealing food (Marais & Meier, 2010:50; Chimhenga, 2002:67).

Some learners come from homes where they are exposed to violence or are themselves abused and mistreated (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273; Tungata, 2006:11). Many learners are exposed to poor coping mechanisms and inappropriate behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, aggression and violence, acts of theft carried out by their caregivers (primary models) (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter 2013:2; The classroom, 2008). Even worse, some learners are made to partake in such activities or are used as cheap labour or as barter; this has serious implications on the development and value system of the learner (Lanza et al. 2010:316; Tungata, 2006:11).

As can be seen from the discussion above the family environment plays an important role in the development and the establishment of an adolescent learner's identity (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:2). Factors such as the structure and functioning of the family, family history and demographics, the parent-child relationship, the discipline practices and the behaviours that are modelled and accepted in the home environment, greatly influence the self-discipline of a learner (Fleming et al. 2010:670; Keijsers et al. 2011:4; Chimhenga, 2002:64-78).

#### 2.3.2.2 PEERS

As children get older, the family begins to fulfil a less significant role and the influence of peers becomes more prominent (Keijsers et al. 2011:4). Socialisation, selection and situational factors play a big role in determining the type of individuals adolescents will associate themselves with (Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140; Estrada & Estrada, 2013:4). As adolescent learners age, parental supervision declines and independence increases; this results in the learner placing more value on the opinion of peers than on those of an older generation (Jessor, 2001:104; Rowe, Woulbroun & Gulley, 2013:164).

Socialisation is a reciprocal interactive process which unfolds gradually in well-established friendships (Laursen, Hafen, Kerr & Stattin, 2012:89; Keijsers et al. 2011:4).

This period is one of status and prestige and results in the formation and joining of “clicks” (Fleming et al. 2010:680; Tungata, 2006:14). Friends seem to grow in similar domains as can be seen when delinquents as well as regular teenagers pair off with each other (Laursen et al. 2012:89).

Laursen et al. (2012:89) use reason action theory to explain the influence that friends have over each other. It is said that influence varies as a function of acceptance amongst peers. This means that peers who are more accepted have a greater influence on the behaviour of the rest of the group. Thus leaders or high status peers establish, model and enforce the social norms of the group and in this way maintain their perceived popularity.

The opposite is also true: those who are least accepted will be more easily influenced (Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140; Pfeifer, Masten, Moore, Oswald, Mazziotta, Lacoboni & Dapretto, 2011:838). It seems the individual with greater social skills and rewarding demeanour will have less incentive to comply to norms that she does not agree with and as such those with less investment seem to have heightened influence (Laursen et al. 2012:89).

Adolescence is a period of curiosity and exploration which occurs amongst groups of peers (Vilone, Ramasco, Sánchez & San Miguel, 2012:6). This urge to experiment is normal and can be healthy if it encourages the learner to explore new horizons and interests. It can however become a problem if negative peer influence leads to problem behaviour such as drugs and violence (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:80). Adolescent learners have a strong need to be accepted by peers; friends’ opinions are very important especially for an individual who is not sure of themselves and/or is not popular. Although peer influence is an important part of developing an identity and value system, it can also result in negative actions in order to gain status (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:11; Fleming et al. 2010:680).

Peer influence may result in small changes in behaviour, such as showing off in front of certain individuals, to large changes, such as the use of drugs (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:80; DeWit et al. 2000:3). It seems however that these changes occur, at least in part, in order to satisfy the learner's need for status (Estrada & Estrada, 2013:4; Marais & Meier, 2010:50). An adolescent learner in need of attention may become the class clown and in this way will gain status by making the class laugh. Some learners will become hostile or even aggressive towards educators and will rally support from other learners to gain status and to be known as the individual who stood up to authority (Tungata, 2006:14; Rowe et al. 2013:164). Often adolescent learners amongst themselves will criticize the actions of those in authority, they discuss the "stupidity" of adults, the inability of adults to understand or to fulfil the learner's needs and their inability to meet the learner's expectations.

These discussions, although sometimes warranted, are often ungrounded and over-exaggerated which in itself is not particularly harmful. They do however affect the opinion and value that a learner attaches to that person or position of authority and that opinion will affect the attitude and manner in which learners behave (Marais & Meier, 2010:50; Chimhenga, 2002:64).

Negative peer influence may encourage less accepted learners to follow the antisocial or even criminal behaviour of the group (Pfeifer et al. 2011: 838; DeWit et al. 2000:3). This may be in the form of partaking in the same activities as the rest of the group members or in the form of an initiation to the group which would involve fulfilling certain acts in order to prove one's loyalty and worth to the group and to gain membership, as is the case with gangs (Tungata, 2006:14; Vilone et al. 2012:6).

Adolescence is a time in which individuals will do just about anything in order to be accepted by others (Foster et al. 2002:7; Johnson, 2010:316; Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140). For this reason it is imperative that parents build an open supporting relationship where strong values and morals are taught and reinforced. This relationship should be well developed before the onset of puberty, in the hope that during this time of confusion, where the opinion of peers counts more than that of parents, learners will have a moral compass to guide them (Johnson, 2010:316).

#### 2.3.2.3 SCHOOL FACTORS

Within a school there are various factors that play a contributing role towards the school environment. Such factors can be grouped into two major categories namely educator and classroom factors and school and system factors which are both interrelated (Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, 2012:164).

The educator determines what learner behaviour is acceptable (Putnum et al. 2003:518; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:11). Learners affect the teaching and the educator's attitude. In this way a dynamic relationship is created in which the class and all its members create a certain type of learning environment. The methods educators use will influence and be influenced by learner behaviour.

The educator-learner relationship can influence a learner's school experience and affect a learner's perception of himself and the world around him (Chimhengam, 2002:81; Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:3). Often educators are the only adults that learners can talk to and may serve as a lifeline to escape from the problems experienced at home and elsewhere (Kimani, 2013:17). Positive educator learner relationships can be inspiring and motivating and may be the relationship that later on made all the difference in a learner's life (Bowen, 2010:2). Educators who do not care enough to develop a relationship with their learners and who ignore problems because it means more work for them, send out the message that the learner is not worth the effort. This kind of unhelpfulness can negatively affect a learner's self-esteem and can make the schooling experience one of isolation and despair.

Some educator aspects may be the cause of behaviour problems or a negative classroom climate (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273). For instance, an educator who is not well versed in the subject content and is not properly prepared for a lesson will have a poor command of her learners (Sackey, 2013:7). Lessons should be of a high quality and should be delivered by educators who are committed to teaching (Marais & Meier, 2010:51). It is imperative that educator training is of a high standard, that only competent educators, who are qualified and serve as good role models, actually stand in front of a classroom (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273). Learners need good role models whose behaviour they can copy; an

educator who behaves inappropriately or has poor work ethic is not going to produce well-adjusted youth for the work force (LeeFon et al. 2013:5).

Educator disunity, absenteeism and lack of dedication and commitment not only interrupt the learning program but also send out a negative message regarding the value of education (Putnum et al. 2003:518; Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, 2012:164). Educators need to work together to ensure the value of education. If the value of education is not conveyed to learners, they will not see the relevance and importance of a good education and behaviour problems will continue to disrupt teaching programs (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273). Some classrooms experience a lack of leadership or misplaced leadership, where the educator is not in charge. Thus it is important that the educator develops leadership and organisation skills as a strong leader, who will motivate and challenge learners (Bear, 2012:4).

Educator behaviour should be professional at all times. An educator who compares learners to other learners, labels learners or makes inappropriate or demeaning comments about and or in front of learners will lose the respect of learners and will struggle to discipline them in a meaningful manner (LeeFon et al. 2013:5). Educators who are interested in the lives of their learners and who provide meaningful and continuous feedback are more likely to gain the respect of learners and in so doing their obedience (Chimhenga, 2002:81; Marais & Meier, 2010:51). One should never enter into a power struggle with a learner, particularly if there is an audience, as one may get what one wants but will also lose credibility (The classroom, 2008; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104). Forcing learners destroys a positive learning environment.

The curriculum which is taught in schools should be meaningful to the life world of the learners, thus it should reflect the culture, language and social background of learners and at the same time be fair and unbiased (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6; Foster et al. 2002:26; Chimhenga, 2002:82). The South African school curriculum has undergone many changes in recent years affecting both educators and learners. This may be the reason for inadequately trained educators, which is yet another source of frustration and violence amongst learners (LeeFon et al. 2013:5; Chimhenga, 2002:82).

Rules are an important aspect of schooling; unfortunately they can also be a source of confusion (Teacherweb, 2007; Bear, 2012:4). Some classes have so many rules that they do not have a number system long enough for all of them, other classrooms have none and very often learners forget to which classroom which rules belong. There does not seem to be a standard set of classroom rules which pertain to every classroom situation but current literature does suggest that learners should be involved in deciding on the rules. This makes it easier to remember and are more likely to be followed as their input was considered in forming them (Foster et al. 2002:13; Martin & Loomis, 2013:213).

Fuzzy rules, illogical and unclear rules also lead to much confusion which is why rules should be clearly stated and consequences for infractions of the rules should be clearly set out and known to all parties concerned (Ahmad, 2011:4). Often the rules are inconsistently enforced which also sends out mixed messages to learners (Putnum et al. 2003:518; Martin & Loomis 2013:213). All educators and/or enforcers of the rules at a school should use the same standards and the same punishments for breaking rules. Some educators have in certain instances failed to enforce the rules from fear of legal ramifications, from frustration with the unclear and often fruitless discipline procedures and even from lack of caring about the individuals themselves (Bowen, 2010:2). Educators often complain about the ineffectiveness of the discipline procedures, the amount of administration required, inadequate resources or staff to deal with the amount of serious behaviour infringements and the poor chance of there being any change in the learner's behaviour (Ahmad, 2011:4).

Since the abolishment of corporal punishment other consequences of misbehaviour have been scrutinised; unfortunately again, there does not seem to be one method that fits all (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:13). Time out or exclusion and detention are the most commonly used punishments, but it seems that for some this is no punishment at all (Foster et al. 2002:13; Sprick, 2013:124). Detention seems to be preferred to some home situations and has even become an opportunity to socialise (Sprick, 2013:124). It seems that the current trend is to focus on corrective rather than punitive measures in an attempt to teach self-control (SACE, 2013:6; De Witt & Lessing, 2013:6)



Some schools just do not have the facilities or the staff to effectively provide for their learners' needs (Hargreaves et al. 2012:164; Tungata, 2006:14). Many schools are rundown; this poor physical appearance, deficient organisation of resources and lack of basic facilities do not lead to a positive school environment or a proud school ethos (Marais & Meier, 2010:52). Overcrowding is also a serious concern. No educator can effectively teach overcrowded classrooms; it just is not possible to give each learner the help and attention they deserve, nor is it possible to teach on a level that is appropriate for every child in such a big class (Kimani, 2013:16).

Overcrowded classes are also difficult to manage and discipline as the educator's attention is spread too thin; this is a condition which often results in violence (Kimani, 2013:16; Tungata, 2006:13). Unfortunately there are not enough educators for the amount of school-going learners, which has resulted in schools being pushed beyond their maximum carrying capacity.

The planning of school activities may also be a source of misbehaviour. Poorly planned events and disorganised procedures leave everyone concerned confused and frustrated and encourage poor behaviour (DeWit et al. 2000:3; Sackey, 2013:7). School activities should be planned in detail and contingency plans developed in order to ensure smooth operating. Well-organized and interesting school activities which involve not only the staff and learners, but parents and the surrounding community put the school in a positive light and create a positive atmosphere in which everyone has a vested interest (Hargreaves et al. 2012:164; Tungata, 2006:13).

#### 2.3.2.4 COMMUNITY

The community in which they live can also impact the development of adolescent learners and their behaviour. Society determines what is acceptable behaviour, so if individuals live in a community where domestic violence is the norm it will not be surprising that they use violence to resolve their problems (DeWit et al. 2000:3; Ahmad, 2011:3).

In a struggling economy, poverty-stricken communities might not place education above all other activities, this may result in "delinquent behaviour" such as stealing in order to

survive, which, although understandable, cannot be allowed in a school setting (Lanza et al. 2010:330). Often poverty-stricken communities experience moral degeneration, as there are no role models to illustrate acceptable behaviour or to monitor and supervise learners' behaviour and the media seem to condone unsavoury behaviour (Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011:273).

This is an environment which is unsafe, where parental supervision and law enforcement is poor and the community answers only to themselves, sending the message of a gang culture (many such learners may even join gangs) (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:67; DeWit et al. 2000:3). Learners are not yet emotionally mature enough to deal with their emotions in a constructive way (Jessor, 2001:97; Marais & Meier, 2010:52). These learners are often angry and experience much aggression and resentment towards a society which has done nothing to help them.

It would seem that since the abolishment of corporal punishment, educators have been left with an array of punitive strategies, but none which seems as effective in instilling discipline as the cane (Tungata, 2006:2; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104). Some parents feel that the discipline methods used presently are ineffective (Bartoo, 2007:1; Bear, 2012:4). This may be because strategies that are typically used, such as removing privileges, reprimanding, detentions and other traditional discipline practices, rely exclusively on punishing the learner for poor behaviour (Compas et al. 1989:736; Sprick, 2013:124).

Recent literature seems to take a more holistic approach to disciplining learners which includes prevention and correction (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6). These prevention strategies seem to be more effective than zero tolerance has been in managing school conduct and provide cooperative productive opportunities to learn appropriate behaviour (Martin & Loomis, 2013:333).

Race, religion, ethnicity, culture, location or context, background and upbringing all contribute to a "multi" classroom in which all participants have the right to be individuals, but also the responsibility to respect and cooperate with those who are different (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:67- 68; Foster et al. 2002:27; Lanza et al. 2010:331). These differences

can be a source of many problems, but they can also add to a diverse environment where individuals feel safe, accepted and like important contributors. This kind of learning atmosphere makes schooling a life lesson.

## 2.4 APPROACHES AND VARIOUS METHODS USED TO INSTIL DISCIPLINE

Traditional methods followed a zero tolerance strategy which involved strict consequences regardless of circumstances (Martin & Loomis, 2013:58; McGee, Wolfe & Wilson, 1997:12).

This punitive stance, it would seem, increases negative behaviour as the inappropriate behaviour is punished but no new behaviour is learnt to replace it (Martin & Loomis, 2013:58). It seems that the wrong message is learnt by punishment and that instead the learner should be guided to constructive behaviour (Marais & Meier, 2010:42). This is not to say that poor behaviour should not result in some consequence, but rather that there should be a relevant punishment of the behaviour. Misbehaviour should be understood in its context, appropriate behaviour should be taught and goals set to prevent further infractions (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:3).

Rules set limits and regulate relationships and social interactions (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012). Rules can be used as a prevention strategy and usually carry with them some sort of consequence for infringement (Foster et al. 2002:13; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:98). All schools should adopt a code of conduct which clearly states the rules of the school. These rules if successfully implemented, contribute to good discipline (Glenn, 2012). This code should not only contain rules and explain what inappropriate behaviour entails but also what appropriate and constructive behaviour involves and how it will be rewarded.

This code should also clearly demarcate the consequences of various behaviours which should be an appropriate measure to the offense committed and vary in degree of seriousness (Glenn, 2012). Procedures on how to deal with different infractions should

also be explained to all parties concerned (Foster et al. 2002:13; Waterville School, 2012:32).

#### 2.4.1 APPROACHES TO MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

School discipline has been approached in various ways, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. As no one approach seems adequate for the discipline of secondary school learners it seems that a combination of approaches may be more effective. Below is a brief overview of some approaches that have been implemented.

##### 2.4.1.1 POSITIVE APPROACH

The positive approach instils responsibility through partnership (Samuels, 2010). The basic grounding of the positive approach is that of respect: by respecting learners, educators in turn gain respect and in so doing, obedience (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:6; Compas et al. 1989:736). This requires the development of good educator-learner relations, the establishment of clear and concise rules and many opportunities in which the learner can be successful (Bowen, 2010:1).

Such opportunities include involving learners in improving their school, which creates a sense of ownership and a community for improvement (Bear, 2012:10; DeWit et al. 2000:3). By having staff and learners working together to create a positive environment learners become motivated to learn, as they have a vested interest in the success of the school and of themselves (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:6; Bowen, 2010:1). It may also spread to include the community by doing community service and being involved in its projects (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6; Chen, 2008:2).

##### 2.4.1.2 ADLERIAN APPROACH

The Adlerian approach uses various methods to understand reasons for a learner's poor behaviour and to rectify it. The principle of this approach is to try to understand the context of the poor behaviour, i.e. the background and possible risk factors, in order to be proactive (Marais & Meier, 2010:42; Compas et al. 1989:736). These methods help to alter the behaviour and to meet the needs of the learner that were fulfilled by the

inappropriate behaviour in a more appropriate manner (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:37; Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 2013:27).

This approach has positive effects on the learner's self-concept, attitude and locus of control (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 2013:27). It also creates a positive atmosphere in which academic performance is improved, an attitude for learning is created and personal and professional growth is nurtured (Tungata, 2006:12; No Put Downs, Teenager Health and Lifestyle Guide, 2012). The effects on disciplining poor behaviour using this method are inconclusive but it would seem that the occurrence of poor behaviour is minimised by the positive effects of a positive environment (Foster et al. 2002:8; Nelsen, 2011:11).

#### 2.4.1.3 STUDENT CENTRED APPROACH

The student centred approach focuses on relationships and attends to the social and emotional needs of the youth through restorative justice (Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140; Nelsen, 2011:11). The educator tries to establish an open, warm and trusting relationship. In so doing it promotes mutual respect, reduces behaviour problems and improves attitudes by helping learners to choose more appropriate behaviours instead of blaming them for poor behaviour (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:127).

This approach, as in the reality therapy model, helps learners to take ownership of their environment. They also learn to self-regulate by being aware of boundaries and expectations that have been set in a trusting and caring relationship (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:98; Tungata, 2006:26). It involves problem solving, developing relationships, developing resiliency, meeting developmental needs, developing social responsibility and values in a supportive and empowering environment (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:3; Tungata, 2006:22). This approach allows for a learner to make choices and to be accountable for those choices by giving them freedom with consequences and rewards (Chen, 2008:7; Bear, 2012:10).

#### 2.4.1.4 BEHAVIOURAL THEORY APPROACH

As behavioural theory explains, behaviour follows a pattern of antecedent, behaviour and consequence (LeeFon et al. 2013: 6; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:37). It is thought that if the antecedent can be controlled or manipulated, the

behaviour will be prevented. Thus by eliminating boredom and frustration, poor behaviours can be prevented and good relationships promoted (Mcnamara, 2012:53; Compas et al. 1989:736). Behaviours that are not prevented by manipulating the antecedent can become extinct by the manipulation of the consequences, either with reward or punishment (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:96)

As can be seen from the brief description of various approaches above, many of the theories overlap in one regard or another. It seems as if the best approach to dealing with today's learners, is to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach which encompasses the learner as a whole person and not merely a number amongst many.

#### 2.4.2 STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

Various strategies have been tried in an attempt to prevent and to help correct learner misbehaviour; no one strategy seems to be effective for all learners or situations. The literature review considers a few of the most common strategies used by educators.

##### 2.4.2.1 SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

Behaviour management programs help learners to identify, understand and rectify their own patterns of behaviour. In this way learners learn to control their patterns of behaviour and replace poor behaviour coping strategies with more effective ones, that will fulfil their developmental needs and need for attention and recognition (Samuels, 2010; Putnum et al. 2003:517).

Pastoral support programs can be individually or family orientated and involves help and advice on personal rather than educational matters. By helping learners to deal effectively with personal issues, behavioural problems can be prevented. This kind of program may include counselling and other professional assistance and usually follows a home-school approach (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010:17-21; Putnum et al. 2003:517).

Effective instruction and management programs improve learner behaviour through therapeutic counselling or remedial education. Team building and teamwork activities can be used to instil discipline (Crone & Horner, 2012:55). Curriculum adaptation and

augmentation procedures create interest and motivation to learn instead of inspiring havoc in a classroom (Tungata, 2006:23; Ortlieb, 2012:387).

#### 2.4.2.2 EMPATHY

Empathy improves behaviours that are incompatible with aggression and thus acts as an inhibitor to violence. Empathy also creates a sense of caring and community and so promotes cooperative learning and positive relationships (Martin & Loomis, 2013:213; Foster et al. 2002:13). Empathy cannot be used as a discipline strategy on its own in every situation.

#### 2.4.2.3 REDUCING CLASS SIZE

By reducing class sizes educators are able to give each individual more attention which promotes cognitive and social skills and has a general positive effect. Smaller classes are also more manageable and teaching strategies for smaller classes are easily adjustable so that every learner is taught at their level (Foster et al. 2002:8; Kimani, 2013:16). Unfortunately this is not always possible due to limited resources.

#### 2.4.2.4 SCHOOL RESCHEDULING

In schools where fighting, violence and bullying have become a regular occurrence, rescheduling of breaks may help to solve the problem. By spreading out lunches, overcrowding of resources is overcome which decreases frustration and helps to curb tempers (Tungata, 2006:18; Kimani, 2013:16).

#### 2.4.2.5 SCHOOL IDENTITY

Insisting that every learner has a school identification document eliminates unauthorized people entering school grounds and causing problems. It also instils a sense of community and a means by which people can learn names, making school a more personal environment (Martin & Loomis, 2013:213; Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140).

#### 2.4.2.6 RECOGNITION OF LEARNING

If schools are seen as a place of learning rather than a place of socialising, discipline problems will decrease. A learning atmosphere will encourage learning and success by placing academic activity and good performance as a desired status instead of being the class clown (Martin & Loomis, 2013:213; Center for Mental Health in Schools at

UCLA, 2008:31). This can be reinforced by rewarding achievements, setting high but attainable standards and goals towards which learners can work. It is imperative that the importance of education be instilled in learners (Marais & Meier, 2010:43).

#### 2.4.2.7 REINFORCING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Reinforcing positive behaviour by using praise and other rewards, helps to maintain the appropriate behaviour and is more motivating than criticising and blaming learners for their poor behaviour (Sprick, 2013:261; Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140).

### 2.4.3 USE OF PUNISHMENT

Using punishment to rectify inappropriate behaviour should be done with caution as the form of punishment, such as writing out lines, may create an even more negative attitude towards educational tasks, such as writing. Punishment should fit the offense, be constructively punitive, be reasonable and accompanied by corrective measures as well in order to instil appropriate behaviour. Punishment can be quick and easy to administer but it is often overused resulting in negative results and no permanent positive effects (Sprick, 2013:101; Tungata, 2006:22).

#### 2.4.3.1 TACTICAL IGNORING

The tactical ignoring of unwanted behaviour is based on the premise that if certain behaviours are not given any reactions or attention, they will not be repeated as they did not invoke the desired response. Some learners will however continue the misbehaviour as others in the class enjoy the entertainment. For this reason tactical ignoring of certain behaviours must be done strategically or other learners will view it as the culprit getting away with bad behaviour; they may then copy the same behaviour as there does not seem to be any consequence (Audet, Lavoie & Royer, 1994:143).

#### 2.4.3.2 VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL INTERVENTIONS

For minor misbehaviours, giving commands, calling a learner, making eye contact or giving signals help to keep the learner on task and focused. These types of verbal and nonverbal interventions are usually used in a classroom situation, where learners' attention is starting to dissipate and they need to be made aware that they are no longer



paying attention (Audet et al.1994:143; Bowen, 2010:3). The educator tries to regroup with minimal distraction to the other learners in the class. This type of intervention is good for minor misbehaviours but cannot be used for serious infractions.

#### 2.4.3.3 REPRIMANDING

Reprimanding a learner for inappropriate behaviour lets the culprit and his audience know that such behaviour will not be tolerated. It is also an immediate way to end distractions and get the focus back on task (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013:115; McGee et al. 1997:12). It may however also raise the wrongdoer's status, as she has now challenged authority, in which case it will have a short term effect and will require an alternative strategy to prevent.

It is important to note here that reprimanding in anger often worsens the situation and may diminish control to a screaming match. It also stands to reason that reprimanding the same learner again and again for misbehaviour becomes ineffective and that this approach needs to be followed up by some action to deter others from the same misbehaviour (Teacherweb, 2007; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104).

#### 2.4.3.4 HUMOUR

Light humour can also be used in a classroom situation to redirect focus and to take the attention away from the disturbance. It can be used to defuse tension and to encourage self-control and, if used effectively, creates an environment of openness and fun balanced with the expectation of no nonsense (Marais & Meier, 2010:44). Cynicism should be avoided.

#### 2.4.3.5 REVOKING PRIVILEGES

Taking away privileges until behaviour is corrected is a good bargaining tool, on condition the privilege is really regarded by the learner as such and the learner will suffer somewhat without it. If it is not seen as a privilege valued by the learner, this withdrawal is hardly punitive and thus serves as no motivation to change behaviour (Tungata, 2006:20; Gilham, 2012:3).

#### 2.4.3.6 RESPONSE COST / DEMERIT SYSTEM

By using the demerit system every learner starts off with a perfect record or score. Points or merits are taken away for every infraction and rewarded for good behaviour (Sprick, 2013:124). Various infractions have a different point weighting (Appendix iv). In this way unacceptable behaviour is curbed and good behaviour is promoted.

This system seems to work particularly well for the average learner; unfortunately the learner with behavioural problems will test the system and will challenge others to get more demerits particularly if there is no consequence to having few or no merits (Lake, Bowen, Demeritt, McCullough, Haimson & Gill, 2012:92).

In order to stop this competition, consequences of accumulating many demerits need to be harsh and consistently enforced; it should involve the discipline committee, learner's parents, principal and governing body in deciding the fate of such a learner so that one realizes the seriousness of one's misbehaviour (Teacherweb, 2007; Moyo, Khewu & Bayaga, 2014:3).

It is also difficult for an educator to monitor every child's good and bad behaviour continuously and so one might find that demerits are given more often than merits. It could also be that one educator may be more subjective than another in the awarding of merits or the distribution of demerits (Lake et al. 2012:92).

#### 2.4.3.7 DETENTION

Detention is a punishment which refers to the detaining in school of an individual for a specified amount of time. This may involve remaining behind after school or during breaks or even coming into school on non-school days. It is usually in response to a learner's poor behaviour in class and should be given with 24 hour notice (Waterville School, 2012:36; Chen, 2008:3).

Detention seems to be a preferred form of punishment as it does not disrupt class lessons and gives the educator more time to deal with the detainees in a more personal capacity. It also seems to be disliked by learners and thus helps to discourage potential wrongdoers (Crone & Horner, 2012:47). Since detention occurs outside of teaching time, the attention seeking scene fails to materialise and so more time is spent on

rectifying the problem behaviour than on controlling the class response to the behaviour. The problem with detention however is that it requires a lot of extra time on the part of the supervising educator and it is becoming more and more difficult to enforce the attendance of detentions (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013:115).

#### 2.4.3.8 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Over the years, parents' involvement in their children's schooling has dwindled. Parent-child relationships have deteriorated and communication is poor. Parents and schools need to work together in order to create a united front of role models.

Role models should model the same appropriate behaviour, as it is a lack of good role models and an abundance of bad ones that has negatively influenced our youth (Manning & Bucher, 2012:241). Children will imitate those whom they admire; unfortunately adolescent learners admire celebrity icons more than parents and these celebrity icons reinforce a particular behaviour by setting an example in the way they behave. Thus it is imperative that parents and educators set a good example for learners to compare and hopefully follow (Foster et al. 2002:8; Pfeifer et al. 2011: 838).

Involving parents in the discipline of their children creates an awareness of parent responsibility in the development of their children and involvement with the school (Manning & Bucher, 2012:246). Parents should at all times be informed of their child's problem behaviour and what disciplinary action has been taken against their child, either telephonically, in writing or by personal meeting. If possible parents should be involved in the decision making and strategies which will be used to curb their child's behaviour problems (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6).

Some schools have developed a system whereby repeat offender's parents are called into school and made to "babysit" their child while they recite the school rules or to accompany their child throughout the school day. In this way the discipline of the learner becomes the parents' responsibility and the educator can continue to focus energy on teaching. Other schools have adopted a policy of improving family and community relations through parent-teen conferences, family contracts and open collaboration (Tungata, 2006:18; Bowen, 2010:1).

#### 2.4.3.9 SUSPENSION

Suspension is the temporary exclusion of a learner from regular classroom activity. This mandatory leave of absence may be in school, where the learner is taken out of the classroom situation and is put under strict supervision where he is expected to complete his work in isolation, or out of school suspension, where the learner is not allowed onto the school property and is remanded to their parent's supervision. Usually work during this period must be completed but no credit will be given (Waterville School, 2012:36).

After a learner is involved in a fight at school, a cooling off period (in the form of suspension) is usually enforced before any mediation occurs. This isolation period allows both parties to consider their role and seems to make communication and mediation less emotion driven and more effective (Western Cape Government, 2014; McGee et al. 1997:12). The advantage of time-out or suspension is that it removes the disruptive child from the classroom setting and from their audience which enables the educator to continue with the lesson.

The disadvantage is that some learners prefer the suspension to regular classroom activities and will deliberately behave in such a way as to provoke a suspension (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2014:187). In this sense the suspension is rewarding poor behaviour and so the behaviour is reinforced and the cycle continues; thus it is important that suspension is used selectively and monitored continuously.

#### 2.4.3.10 EXCLUSION

Exclusion or expulsion is the permanent removal of a learner from the school and is seen as a last resort in disciplinary action (Hemphill et al. 2014:187).

#### 2.4.3.11 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

In some cases a specialised behavioural program may be helpful (Crone et al. 2010:17-21). Such a program involves learning opportunities that aim to improve attitude and behaviour and are not solely academic in nature. They also allow for the learner to experience success and so reinforce adjusted behaviours (Chen, 2008:3; Kim, 2011:91). In some cases a child with behavioural problems has needs which cannot be

met in a mainstream school. In such an instance, an alternative school, such as “Boys Town”, may be considered (Kim, 2011:91).

#### 2.4.3.12 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment, although abolished in South Africa, is the chastising of learners with a cane, birch, paddle or strap (South African Council for Educators, 2013:2; McGee et al. 1997:12).

This form of physical punishment seemed effective in curbing behaviour problems but this was out of fear (Western Cape Government, 2014). This fear, although effective in deterring behaviour problems, is not conducive to a safe learning environment, or to the development of a well-rounded individual. It was also a method abused and misused by those in authority and an offence against the child’s basic human right to a safe environment (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6).

There are various approaches to disciplining learners and numerous strategies and methods which can be used, each with their advantages and disadvantages. No individual discipline technique is 100% effective and so it is a combination of the above that is most likely to result in success.

## 2.5 EFFECTS OF POOR DISCIPLINE

School indiscipline not only affects effective instruction and running of the school, but can also have far reaching effects on the development of the adolescent learner. Indiscipline affects not only the ill-behaved learner but also those around them.

### 2.5.1 ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

Adolescence is a time of cognitive shift. During this stage learners develop reasoning skills, abstract thinking and metacognition. Adolescent learners develop complex thought, learn to express feelings and have a stronger sense of right and wrong. This is not to say that learners will behave in an appropriate manner, but that they are more

aware of social norms (Morgan & Huebner, 2009:371; Manning & Bucher, 2012:22). Well-behaved learners usually perform well at school and success reaps success (Nakpodia, 2010:4). It thus stands to reason that learners who misbehave at school are less likely to succeed academically and are likely to make it difficult for others to succeed. Constant distractions and negative peer influence make it difficult for learners to stay on the right path (Stang & Story, 2005:4; Lochan, 2012:25).

Some schools, in an attempt to illuminate poor discipline, have identified and separated learners who are seen as behaviour problems into special classes (Crone & Horner, 2012:47; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:31). These alternative classes in theory benefit all learners in that discipline problems are confined to one or two classes which are generally smaller. This enables educators to continue with regular classes and to adapt lessons for special classes so that learning can occur on all levels (Samuels, 2010).

The negative side to this system is that very often resources are limited resulting in these “special classes” being taught by less qualified or inexperienced educators who often are not equipped to deal with such learners. This resulted in them receiving substandard education (Schwarz, 2011:2). It also results in the burnout of educators, who are now overwhelmed by the indiscipline and administration involved in these classes (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010:62).

In other schools suspension from class is used so that other learners do not have their lessons interrupted (Hemphill et al. 2014:187). This may help the average learner who remains in class, but it puts the misbehaving learner at a serious disadvantage, as this learner is then expected to complete the work on his own.

It can be seen that an increase in indiscipline in schools often corresponds with poor academic competence and performance resulting in these learners repeating the school year (Herrenkohl, Kosterman, Mason, Hawkins, McCarty & McCauley, 2010:656; Jessor, 2001:97). It is unclear if it is the indiscipline that results in poor academic performance or if it is poor academic performance that results in indiscipline (Lanza et al. 2010:327). There is also evidence that suggests that children who experience

behaviour problems at school are at a greater risk of not completing basic education. They are less likely to continue with tertiary education and are more likely to settle with lower income jobs (Tungata, 2006:28; Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2011:9). Unruliness in school affects the academic performance of the problem child and those around them; it also impacts heavily on the future success of such a child (Foster et al. 2002:7).

### 2.5.2 DEVELOPMENTAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Adolescent learners are at a developmental stage where they start to understand abstract ideas, develop moral philosophies and a mature sense of self (Earl et al. 2013:68). They struggle for independence and the establishment of their own identity which often results in conflict (Compas et al. 1989:736; Mannheim, 2011:2).

Teenagers in general are self-conscious, sensitive to body changes, egocentric and curious. They experiment with different roles, different groups and push different boundaries (Kiprop & Chepkilot, 2011:273). Adolescent learners experience intense emotions and relationships and status becomes very important to them. There is increased interest and experimentation within intimate relationships and sexual identity, which can be a very confusing, frustrating and hurtful time (Morgan & Huebner, 2009:370; Lochan, 2012:25).

All these factors are a part of normal development, but for a child who has been identified as having a behaviour problem, there is even a greater risk of experiencing social and emotional problems. It has been seen that many children who have been labelled as having discipline problems, internalise problems and that it is more likely that such learners will later suffer from depression and other mood disorders (Foster et al. 2002:13; Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011:117).

### 2.5.3 SOCIAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS

Adolescence is a time of socialisation and experimentation (Morgan & Huebner; 2009:402; Manning & Bucher, 2012:22) and it is during this time that one discovers who

one is. This however is not always a smooth journey and often extrinsic factors will have a great influence on one's development (Pakaslahti et al. 2002:140; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104).

Experimentation in the form of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs may stop after one bad experience or it may lead to substance abuse and other social problems, such as stealing to support the addiction. Such addictions cause problems in relationships, health problems and intensify and increase the risk of developing other behavioural and/or psychological disorders (Pfeifer et al. 2011: 838; Stang & Story, 2005: 3).

An adolescent learner who displays behaviour problems at school is at an increased risk of developing relationship problems, not only with those in positions of authority but also with peers and in intimate relationships, which may continue into adulthood (Foster et al. 2002:7; Herrenkohl et al. 2010:657). Individuals who display behaviour problems at school are at greater risk of developing antisocial delinquent behaviour which is a problem not only for the individual but for the community as well.

Research shows that an increase in discipline problems in schools correlates with an increase in adolescents moving through the juvenile justice system and later as adults an increased risk of criminal activity (Schwarz, 2011:3). This costs society not only in terms of monetary value but in terms of safety, health and time.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

Problem behaviour may be seen as inappropriate behaviour which can be attributed to disciplinary problems in schools (Marais & Meier 2010:45). This includes any behaviour that will disrupt the learning environment. According to Tungata (2006:27) discipline measures might stop bad behaviour but this does not in itself start good behaviour. Seen in this light, it has become necessary to employ a multidisciplinary approach to the discipline of learners.



Many factors have been given as possible reasons for a learner displaying such behavioural problems. Understanding the cause of the problem may help to prevent such problems and will also give insight into dealing with such an individual.

Intrinsic factors (situated within the adolescent) may give rise to behaviour problems; these may include brain dysfunction, disabilities, learning problems, psychological conditions and health problems, personality and temperament and developmental needs (Kirk et al. 2011:179). Extrinsic factors are factors which occur outside the individual and affect the individual's adjustment to a situation (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012:104). Examples of such factors include the home environment, school environment, the community and society in which one functions and the influence of peers (Fleming et al. 2010:670).

The secondary school learners come from a variety of different backgrounds, bringing learners together from a variety of different contexts. This can be very challenging but can also create an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance.

At this stage the secondary school in Gauteng under study uses a combination of disciplinary approaches and methods, many of which were discussed in section 2.4. The school tends to follow a behavioural therapy approach and uses traditional methods of punishment such as detention, suspension and expulsion (Sprick, 2013:124). There has however been a move towards a more student-centred approach with the use of the demerit system, parent involvement, the reinforcement or reward of positive behaviour and the initiation of specialised programs such as counselling support programs, which include counselling and remedial support (South African Council for Educators, 2013:4).

As can be seen from the above discussion, discipline in schools plays an important role in a learner's development (Morgan & Huebner, 2009:370; Herrenkohl et al. 2010:657). Not only will discipline have academic implications for the individual but also emotional, social and moral implications, which not only affect the adolescent but will also play a role in the adult that individual becomes (Schwarz, 2011:3).

Chapter Three elaborates on the research methodology already introduced in Chapter One. We shall discuss the research paradigm and the reason for this choice. Data gathering methods and sampling procedures will be expanded.

Data collection is discussed as well as precautions to preserve reliability and validity. The procedure used during data analysis of qualitative information is described. Interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data collected follow.

# CHAPTER 3-

## RESEARCH DESIGN

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*Research “is a human activity whereby a particular phenomenon in reality is studied objectively in order to establish a valid understanding of the phenomenon.” (Steyn, 2006:8)*

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, the literature study highlighted different facets of the current disciplinary situation at secondary schools in South Africa. Both intrinsic and extrinsic causative factors of behaviour problems (Keijsers, Loeber, Branje & Meeus, 2011:7) were studied in an attempt to understand the possible reasons for learner misbehaviour. Various theoretical approaches concerning behaviour were compared and management strategies discussed. Chapter Two reported on different punitive measures and the success or failure thereof. To conclude, a closer look was taken at the possible effects that poor discipline has on learners, in an attempt to illustrate the importance of implementing a more effective system.

This study attempted to give an indication of the learners’ perspectives regarding their opinion of the discipline problems experienced at their school by investigating the possible reasons for poor behaviour and the manner in which it may manifest. The study sought to identify possible strengths and weaknesses of the current discipline system and management strategies. The investigation also focussed on possible solutions and suggestions to improve the discipline system as described by the learners.

Chapter Three describes the details of the research design followed during the empirical phase of this investigation. It explains the procedures followed through the phases of

data gathering and collection, data analysis and interpretation. It also gives an account of measures used to ensure trustworthiness (reliability and validity) as well as the limits thereof. Ethical considerations are described.

The purpose of this phase of the study was to enter into the field of adolescent learners, so as to gain insight into their thoughts, experiences and perceptions (Rossman & Rallis, 2011:143) of the current discipline system employed at this secondary school.

This investigation was done by means of opinion-based questionnaires which were completed by Grade 10 learners at the school under study. After this focus group discussions were held with members of the representative council of learners to expand the findings from the questionnaires and to generate some ideas of how to move forward. The hope was that by investigating facets of the discipline system, such as its strengths and weaknesses, causes of discipline problems and approaches and strategies used to correct discipline problems. Relevant stakeholders would gain insight into and be able to make positive changes to the current discipline system, in order to make it more effective for modern times.

Adolescent learners, educators and parents will benefit from such improvements to the discipline system as this should result in improved discipline. If discipline is improved, teaching and parenting becomes more effective and learners will benefit academically, socially and emotionally, as was discussed in Chapter 2.

### 3.2 THE SPECIFIC RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main focus of this study was to determine how adolescent learners perceive the current discipline system at a secondary school in Gauteng. A critical look was taken at the current discipline system and supporting policies that are currently implemented at the school.

The learners' points of view were investigated regarding different facets of the discipline system in an attempt to understand and correct it. Bowen (2010:1) recognises that

learners' behaviour is a result of their environment. Accordingly this research investigated the possible causative factors, as seen by the learners, of such behaviour.

The learners' opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of various discipline techniques were analysed and recommendations were made from these findings. This investigation hopes to establish a group consensus regarding the situation, which is unique to this environment and expand on the findings. As a secondary aim it was envisaged that the learners involved in the study would be able to shed some light on how to improve the discipline system in the best interests of all stakeholders.

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Phenomenology collects data on how an individual makes sense out of a particular experience or situation, for instance discipline at a secondary school. This approach aims to transform a lived experience into a description by understanding one's perspective of one's everyday lived experience within the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:26; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:96). The research problem deals with the social reality of discipline as perceived and experienced by the individual learner and not a relationship of cause and effect.

Knowledge is personally experienced and can have multiple interpretations. For this reason an anti-positivism paradigm was chosen for this study. Anti-positivism emphasises that social reality is viewed and interpreted by the individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013:454) rather than it being a generalised norm. It does not establish a specific relationship amongst components but rather emphasises human interaction within a phenomenon and suggests a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to social enquiry (Bryman, 2012:379).

This type of research is usually conducted as an entry into a field which can then be expanded on by quantitative research. Alternatively it can be used to expand on and explain results from a quantitative research design. Since this study focused on the

learners' perspectives and experiences of discipline at a secondary school in Gauteng, it is only apt that the research followed the qualitative anti-positivist paradigm.

### 3.3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHOD

The value of qualitative research is *"its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the 'human' side of an issue that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals."* (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005:1).

The qualitative approach was chosen for this research study as it is a method used to gain understanding and insight into the life-worlds of the research participants, the learners at a secondary school in Gauteng. Intangible factors such as social norms, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language and gender may play a role in the research outcome and may not be apparent to the quantitative researcher (Egwuonwu, 2008:14; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:387) when looking at numbers. These factors are more apparent in qualitative research and add a variety to the information gathered. They may also be the reason for various viewpoints rather than one generalised answer, as each person experiences the same phenomenon, the discipline system, in a different way. This form of research offers a better explanation of the phenomenon than statistics and this will be the focus of this study.

This research focuses on how the learners themselves experience the current discipline procedures at the secondary school and what they perceive to be possible future improvements to the system. *"Qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implications of quantitative data"* (Mack et al. 2005:1). The vast diversity of backgrounds will thus add context and richness to the research. This variety may not only improve the understanding of the situation, but may also increase the number and variety of solutions offered to improve the situation.

Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, i.e. other English, dual medium, mainstream secondary schools in the area, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon, typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalised (Cohen et al. 2013:454).

Qualitative methods are typically more flexible – that is, they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. They are interactive, as data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned while the study progresses (Flick, 2014:25). In this way even more hypotheses are developed and tested as the study continues.

*“Qualitative methods ask mostly “open-ended” questions, where participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex.”* (Mack et al. 2005:4). Open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant. These may be unanticipated by the researcher, rich and explanatory in nature. Another advantage of qualitative methods is that they allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses, (Flick, 2014:25) in order to find deeper meaning.

A multi-method strategy has been employed in this research study; this includes an interactive approach with participants in the form of artefacts, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups in order to obtain valid data. The multiple realities are viewed as so complex that one cannot decide on a single methodology. This means that multiple strategies are used to collect, corroborate and confirm the data obtained in order to increase validity and the credibility of the study (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 340; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:387).

In this study the primary source of data collection was in the form of questionnaires. The findings of these questionnaires were then confirmed or refuted through focus group discussions and interviews conducted with key role players.

In this design both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and the strength of one method is offset against the weaknesses of the other, so that together they provide a

more comprehensive set of data (Flick, 2014:420). The more the questionnaire results match the focus group results, the greater the validity of the conclusion.

### 3.3.2 PHASES OF THE STUDY

Data collection involves the process of gathering information from various sources. Data for this study were collected in a variety of forms. This promotes trustworthiness by increasing validity based on the triangulation of information (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 28; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:143).

A literature study was conducted on the phenomenon of discipline in secondary schools during the background phase of the study; this is reported in Chapter 2. Policy documents of the school, such as the code of conduct, described in Chapter 4, were consulted by the researcher to gather information and gain entry into the field. Mixed questionnaires were completed by representatives during the exploratory phase. Interviews and focus groups with role players were conducted during the closing phase.

#### 3.3.2.1 *BACKGROUND*

An overview was done of the available literature in journals, books, official documents and educational policies in order to explore the work of other researchers on the phenomenon of discipline in secondary schools, particularly as it relates to the secondary school's current disciplinary system (Cohen et al. 2013:531). The literature review as reported in Chapter 2 offered various discipline strategies. The strengths and weaknesses of each strategy was reported and compared.

Taking into consideration the banning of corporal punishment and the search for alternatives, the implementation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 and inclusive education policies, documents and publications of the Department of Education had to be incorporated in this research. These documents form the basis of how a school system is run and prescribe guidelines for school management (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 356; Creswell, 2012:145).



#### 3.3.2.2 *ENTRY*

Documents and artefact collections are tangible manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions and values. It is a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data with little or no reciprocity between the researcher and the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:356; Cohen et al. 2013:531). As a point of departure, official documents including internal policy and papers, external communication and data were analysed. The background phase involved an analysis of external documents and policies and how they affect school governance. The entry phase focused more on internal papers such as the school's code of conduct and other policies, which are specific to the school (Appendix iv). Internal papers include working papers of disciplinary codes and policies, which are formal documents that provide an internal perspective of the organisation (Creswell, 2012:145).

#### 3.3.2.3 *EXPLORATION*

Open-ended questions are questions which focus on the participants' perception or opinion of a particular phenomenon, in this case the discipline at a secondary school in Gauteng. These questions contain questions which allow for a large range of opinion-based responses. There is typically no right or wrong answer and usually the question asks for a motivation of the answer (May, 2011:103). Open-ended questionnaires are used to obtain information regarding different thoughts, ideas and opinions, that is, to identify different themes regarding a subject rather than to determine how many people share the same view.

Closed questions are questions that do not allow for an opinion, they typically ask participants to choose between predetermined responses. Structured questions are easier to categorise and are ideal to use when there is a large number of participants or items. They do however lose accuracy and variability and do not allow **for** alternative answers (May, 2011:103).

In order to overcome the disadvantages of structured questions, both structured and open-ended questions were used in this questionnaire. Certain questions were given predetermined responses from which to choose as is typical of a structured question, but participants were then given the opportunity to motivate the response, typical of an

open-ended question format (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 197; Bryman, 2012:627). In this way both qualitative and quantitative data was obtained. Rank order questions were also asked in order to gauge the value of each predetermined option relating to the discipline system (Appendix viii).

#### 3.3.2.4 CLOSURE

Focus groups are a highly useful flexible technique for exploratory research that can be a starting point for more comprehensive quantitative research (May, 2011:137). Focus groups are a qualitative data collection method effective in helping researchers learn the social norms of a community or subgroup, as well as the range of perspectives that exist within that community or subgroup (Mack et al. 2005:52; Flick, 2014:242). Focus groups usually consist of between six and twelve participants who are representative in some way of the population (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:545).

Responses to open-ended questions of group members may build on those of other members and the result of free-flowing discussion may be new information or perspectives. In this way each member in the group is stimulated by the different perspectives and ideas of others which increases the quality and richness of the researcher's data (Silverman, 2010:129).

Focus groups are used to generate hypotheses to be tested quantitatively, to generate further information for modification, to provide general background information, to provide impressions for which little information is available, to obtain new ideas, to generate ideas for development, to interpret results or to obtain a better understanding of a problem (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005:560; Bryman, 2012:500). In this study of the discipline system the focus groups served a dual purpose. The primary function was to confirm and expand on the findings of the questionnaires conducted in the exploratory phase and secondly to generate new ideas for development and further research (Appendix ix).

A principal advantage of focus groups is that they yield a large amount of information over a relatively short period of time. They are also effective for accessing a broad

range of views on a specific topic, as opposed to achieving group consensus (Mack et al. 2005:52; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:545).

In-depth interviewing involves open response questions to obtain data of participants' meanings, how individuals conceive their world and how they make sense of important events in their lives (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006:350; Flick, 2014:207). Both the informal conversational interview and interview guide approach were used in order to gain information on the perception of the discipline system from a representative of the executive staff in order to compare the findings with those of the learners from the representative council of learners. It was hoped that by comparing these findings we could bridge the gap between those who implement the discipline system and those who are affected by it. It also showed the importance of including learners in the decisions which will govern their behaviour at school. These types of interviews were both relatively conversational and situational (Rossman & Rallis, 2011:177) (Appendix x).

Based on the results obtained from the research study, a comprehensive report was drawn up as feedback and submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education, executive staff of the secondary school, the school governing body and the representative council of learners.

### 3.3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The emergent design of this study made it circular in nature, with the processes of sampling, data collection and partial analysis being simultaneous and interactive, rather than occurring in discrete sequential steps (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1993:374; Creswell, 2012:145). As described in the previous section, three different methods of data collection were incorporated in various phases of this study.

Before any data collection may occur, permission from various role players is essential. This involved gaining permission from the Department of Education and from the school itself (Appendix I and Appendix ii). Once the researcher was given access to the

research site, research participants were identified and permission from participants gained (Mack et al. 2005:52; Silverman, 2010:416).

#### *3.3.3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE*

The research focus of this study “Adolescents’ perspectives of discipline problems at a Secondary School in Gauteng” sparked many subtopics to be investigated. The questionnaire, comprising both structured and unstructured questions (Tuckman & Harper, 2012:254) as described in the previous section, was divided into the following sections:

- Possible reasons for learner misbehaviour.
- Effectiveness of the current discipline system and possible improvements.
- Effectiveness of various punitive measures currently employed by the school.
- The effect of poor discipline on learners.

Each section comprised of various questions based on research findings of the literature study (Chapter 2) as well as data collected during the entry phase, i.e. internal documents.

#### *3.3.3.2 PROCESS REGARDING THE APPLICATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES*

It was decided that the Grade 10 learners would be an ideal group to respond to the questionnaire as they have had a deal of exposure to the system in question and still have an invested interest in implementing possible future changes. This made them a rich data source (Mack et al. 2005:27; Bryman, 2012:415). Information sheets, consent forms and assent forms were handed out to all Grade 10 learners (Appendix v; Appendix vi and Appendix vii).

Those learners who returned the consent forms were then grouped together for one session in order to conduct the questionnaire. Again each learner was informed of the purpose, procedure and voluntary nature of the study. They were informed about confidentiality and to avoid intimidation, were instructed to leave their questionnaires on their desks when they had completed them rather than to hand them in to the researcher. Each learner was given a questionnaire which was read through together with the researcher. Any questions that arose were clarified. Learners were thanked

again for their participation. Learners were then given an hour to complete the questionnaire and were allowed to leave the venue as soon as they had finished. Questionnaires were collected by the researcher at the end of the session. This data was then recorded, coded and categorised to find common themes and patterns.

#### *3.3.3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES*

Focus groups are especially effective for capturing information about social norms and the variety of opinions or views within a population (Flick, 2014:242). Focus groups as a means of data collection was chosen based on these advantages.

The focus group discussions were intended to shed light on some of the responses given in the questionnaires. As such, the focus group guidelines were designed in much the same manner as the questionnaire and covered the same broad topics; however, the questions put forward were not as direct or structured (Appendix ix). The groups were given broader topics to discuss rather than specific questions and in this manner the importance of the subtopics became evident.

I conducted two sessions which were divided into two main topics. The first session dealt with the overall perception of the current discipline system, as well as possible reasons for learner misbehaviour. The second session dealt with the current discipline system and its weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weakness of certain strategies used to maintain discipline in a classroom. In closing we discussed briefly the improvements that could be made to such a system.

#### *3.3.3.4 PROCESS REGARDING CONDUCTING THE FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS*

After gaining permission to conduct research at the secondary school, information sheets, and consent and assent forms were handed out to all the members of the Representative Council of Learners at the secondary school. The researcher then arranged with the RCL coordinator to organise an afternoon during one of the RCLs scheduled meetings to conduct the focus group discussions with those members who had given consent (in this case all RLC members).

At the start of the session the purpose of the research and procedure were explained. Learners were instructed to respect privacy and confidentiality and were asked not to

speak outside of the group. In order to protect anonymity, learners were asked not to refer to anyone by name during the discussion. This anonymity extended to participants, other learners and educators. Participants were also instructed to talk one at a time and the process was controlled by the researcher who addressed each participant individually.

The researcher used the focus group guidelines (Appendix ix) to create a power point presentation of topics to be discussed (Appendix xi). This served only as a guide of topics covered in each session. The researcher introduced topics by asking open-ended questions which sparked discussion and debate amongst the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:545). Brief notes were taken of salient features of the discussion and the sessions were recorded to be transcribed and analysed at a later stage.

Typed transcripts were the most utilised form of focus group data. During the data analysis phase of the research, after data collection, transcripts were coded according to participants' responses to each question and/or to the most salient themes emerging across the set of focus groups (Mack et al. 2005:54; Silverman, 2010:439).

#### *3.3.3.5 DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN INTERVIEW GUIDELINES*

The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. The researcher's interviewing techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic. Researchers engage with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants' responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses (Mack et al. 2005:29; Bryman, 2012:468).

The informal conversational and interview guideline approaches were adopted in order to ensure that relevant topics were covered without compromising the natural course of events (Tuckman & Harper, 2012:254). Again guidelines were composed before conducting the interview.

These guidelines were the same as the topics and questions posed to the focus groups. The topics of concern included:

- Possible reasons for behavioural problems in learners.
- The effectiveness of the current discipline system and possible improvements.
- The effectiveness of strategies used to maintain classroom discipline

#### 3.3.3.6 *PROCESS REGARDING THE CONDUCTING OF THE INTERVIEW*

After gaining permission to conduct research at the secondary school, the researcher had to identify the “expert” in the research field. The interviewee was chosen based on experience in the field and the quality of the information that could be provided. The principal was identified as a rich source of information as he had been in the role of educator, management and parent. The interview took place at the secondary school in question. During in-depth interviews, the person being interviewed was considered the expert and the interviewer was considered the learner (Mack et al. 2005:29; May 2011:131). The interviewee was informed of the purpose of the research and the procedure to be followed and was then asked to participate. Before the interview could be conducted consent in writing was required and an interview date was set. This gave both the researcher and the interviewee time to prepare.

On the day of the interview the interviewee was again reminded of the nature of the research, voluntary nature of the interview, confidentiality and recording. The interviewer conducted the interview using the interview guidelines discussed above. The interview was approximately one hour in duration. The researcher made use of notes as well as recordings which were transcribed and analysed.

#### 3.3.4 SAMPLING AND PROCEDURE

In qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. The study’s research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select (Mack et al. 2005:5; May, 2011:94).

Nonprobability sampling is the most common sampling strategy used in educational research (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 125; Creswell, 2012:145). The researcher uses subjects who are accessible or who represent certain types of characteristics. Nonprobability sampling includes convenience sampling, purposeful sampling and quota sampling.

Nonprobability purposive sampling was used when deciding on the Grade to be used in this study. Grade 10 learners were used in order to obtain the deepest possible understanding of the discipline system at a secondary school in Gauteng from a learner perspective.

Random sampling is “*the arbitrary selection of people to be part of a sample because they are thought to be representative of the population studied*” (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 126). The participants from the Grade 10 group were selected randomly in order to minimise bias and to obtain a wide selection of opinions.

Sample sizes, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study’s objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection (Mack et al. 2005:5; Bryman, 2012:564).

The advantage of using purposeful sampling is that it is less costly and time consuming and assures receipt of needed information. However, it is difficult to generalise the findings to other subjects and there is a greater likelihood of experimenter or subject bias (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 128; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:59).

The study made use of site selection purposeful sampling by which the site, the secondary school in Gauteng, was selected to locate people directly involved in the phenomenon. By sampling participants from this specific secondary school we could gain a greater understanding of the experiences of the learners who were affected by the current disciplinary system, which was in question. This however limited our ability



to generalise the findings to other secondary schools as they only pertain to populations who share the same characteristics as the sample.

The sample group of Grade 10 learners was determined randomly, any Grade 10 learner was permitted to participate in the hope that a greater diversity of opinions would be achieved.

#### *3.3.4.1 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER*

Qualitative researchers become immersed in the situations and the phenomena studied (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 319). The research role may vary from that of a traditional neutral stance to that of an active participatory role, depending on the selected research approach. These roles vary in terms of the way the researcher's presence affects the social system and the persons under study (Rossman & Rallis, 2011:143). In this instance the role was that of the interviewer. As a qualitative researcher, the following roles must be kept in mind (Lessing, 2011:4; Mack et al. 2005:37, 59, 69):

- The researcher must have requisite knowledge and skills of the methodology, setting and nature of the research.
- The researcher must be familiar with own biases, assumptions, expectations and values.
- The researcher must be empathetic, intelligent, energetic and interested in listening.
- The researcher must be open to embracing multiple realities.
- The researcher must be prepared to produce detailed, comprehensive and lengthy reports.
- The researcher must be an effective interviewer, moderator and note taker.

#### *3.3.4.2 RESEARCH SITE*

Since the study was specific to the discipline system of the secondary school in Gauteng, the study was carried out with current learners at the secondary school. In accordance with purposeful site sampling procedures (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 319; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:143) questionnaires were completed by a sample of

Grade 10 learners at the secondary school. The motivation for this selection was that they still had a vested interest in the future of the school and had been a part of the system long enough to be able to give mature insight into the current system. Focus groups were carried out with members of the Representative Council of Learners at the secondary school in order to confirm and expand on the findings of the questionnaires. The interview was conducted with the current principal of the secondary school. All research took place on the premises.

The secondary school is a middle class, ex-model C school, in the suburb of Brackendowns, Alberton. It is one of only two English secondary schools in the immediate area and is a feeder school for three primary schools in the area. The School accommodates approximately 1200 learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12.

The secondary school has been known for its academic excellence and has been one of the top schools in the District 16 area for the last decade. It has also been rated as one of the top ten schools (private and public) in Gauteng by Serve Africa and was placed in the top 200 schools in South Africa by Allan Gray Orbis foundation.

The learners at the secondary school are of mixed races, socioeconomic status, ethnic and religious views which provide a sample of diverse backgrounds and values. The school accommodates both males and females.

#### *3.3.4.3 IDENTIFYING DATA SOURCES*

Grade 10 learners were the focus of this study as they had been involved with and had experienced the current discipline system at the secondary school and still have a vested interest in implementing possible change.

The questionnaires were given to groups of learners which comprised of boys and girls in Grade 10, regardless of age, academic achievement or social standing. The group was intended to be as diverse as possible including learners who excel academically, culturally, on the sports field as well as those who are not noticed in these categories and those regarded as discipline problems.

No Grade 10 learner was excluded from the study based on individual characteristics, as long as they fulfilled the criteria of being a current Grade 10 learner at the school in question. Due to the voluntary nature of participation in this questionnaire, certain groups may have excluded themselves, which was beyond the researcher's control.

The focus groups were used to clarify, confirm and expand on the findings of the questionnaires (Silverman, 2010:129). They consisted of members of the Representative Council of Learners (Grade 8 to Grade 12) as these were learners who had been elected by other learners to represent their views. As a representative group, it was hoped that their insight would shed light on the findings of the questionnaires and enable greater validity.

An in depth interview was conducted with a member of the executive staff as this person was continuously involved in the discipline of learners and in implementing the current discipline system (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010:93). The purpose of this interview was to highlight the differences in perspective surrounding the same phenomenon. The interviewee (the principal) was chosen based on his knowledge and experience with the discipline system as it affected the learners.

#### 3.3.4.4 *SAMPLE SIZE*

Purposive samples can range between one to forty or more participants and is related to the purpose of the research problem, the availability of information-rich participants and the data collection strategy (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006:322; Bryman 2012:415). Since this study focused only on the situation at the secondary school in question and was not intended for generalisation to the greater population, the sample size was limited to the number of information-rich participants who were willing to participate, or to the saturation level.

Questionnaires were completed by not less than forty Grade 10 learners. Participants were sourced based on knowledge and experience with regards to the discipline system at the secondary school, as well as the possibility of offering differing views. Thus all Grade 10 learners from different social groupings were intentionally asked to participate so as to obtain diverse perceptions. The answering of questionnaires took place at

school outside of official teaching time. The Grade 10 learner population was chosen as a sample as they have been at the secondary school long enough to have experienced the effects of the current disciplinary system and still have a vested interest in implementing possible change.

A letter was sent out to all Grade 10 learners and their parents explaining the purpose of the research and the procedure to be followed (Appendix v). Any Grade 10 learner who volunteered to participate in the questionnaire and had parental consent was accepted.

Focus groups involve no more than ten learners per focus group and participants were sourced based on knowledge and differing perspectives. The study included one focus group consisting of the members of the Representative Council of Learners at the secondary school, as these are learners who have been voted for by other learners to represent their views. Each session was between one to one and a half hours in duration and took place at school, outside of official school hours. Letters were sent home to all the representative council learners, explaining the purpose of the research and the procedure to be followed (Appendix v). Only members of the Representative Council of Learners who had signed consent were considered for the focus group sessions.

Only one in depth interview was conducted with a member of the executive staff. The interviewee was chosen based on his experience with the discipline system in question. The interviewee has had a long history at the secondary school and has experience with this system as an educator, a head of department and now as a part of senior management. This experience qualifies the interviewee as an information-rich source. The interview was between one to one and a half hours and was intended simply as a means of comparison in perspectives.

#### 3.3.4.5 SATURATION

Saturation is the point at which further investigation does not render new information but rather repeated or redundant information. Additional data will only confirm categories,

themes and conclusions already reached. Saturation determines the sample size in qualitative studies (Mason, 2010:2)

#### 3.3.4.6 *TRUSTWORTHINESS*

To ensure trustworthiness questionnaires and focus group interviews were used to counterbalance the validity and reliability of methods as a form of triangulation. Triangulation increases the accuracy of interpretation and confirms that data obtained is not due to chance or circumstances. Triangulation involves cross-checking multiple data sources and collection procedures to evaluate the extent to which all evidence converges (Mason, 2010:7). To find regularities in the data, the researcher compares different sources, situations and methods to see whether the same pattern keeps recurring (Flick, 2014:242).

Trustworthy data should be selected by assessing solicited versus unsolicited data, subtle influences amongst the participants, specific versus vague statements and accuracy of the sources (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 374; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:59). Trustworthiness implies credibility, confidence in the findings, transferability, that results can be generalised, dependability, that findings are consistent, conformability and that findings can be confirmed by other's research (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006: 374; Rossman & Rallis, 2011:59). The results from this study adhered to all these criteria apart from not being generalisable to other situations as the investigation was specific to a secondary school in Gauteng.

Qualitative researchers agree on strategies that promote trustworthiness in a study. These procedures are well described by (Mc Millan & Shumacher, 2006:375) and include:

- Triangulation or multiple sources of data as evidence.
- Member checks or arranging for those who provided data to evaluate the conclusions.
- Saturation or continuous data collection to the point where more data adds little to regularities that have already surfaced.
- Thick description or providing rich detail of the context of the study.

- Plausible alternatives or the rationale for ruling out alternative explanations and accounting for discrepant (negative) cases.

### 3.3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher is responsible for ensuring the ethical quality of the inquiry and thus has an obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of the research (Egwuonwu, 2008:61; Cohen et al. 2013:512). The following ethical considerations were taken into account for this research study (Mack et al. 2005:54; Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006:334):

- The researcher obtained approval for the research to be conducted from the school and the department of education concerned (Appendix I and Appendix ii).
- The researcher clearly stated the aims, objectives and voluntary nature of the study, as well as possible benefits and risks involved to the individual and the school at large (Appendix v).
- Furthermore the researcher obtained informed consent from the guardians of participants and assent from participants as they were minors. Participants were informed of voluntary participation, confidentiality and the limits thereof and their right to withdraw at any time without negative effect (Appendix vi and Appendix vii).
- The researcher provided help (debriefing) for any participants who could have, as a result of participation, been harmed, as well as the opportunity to receive help from persons not involved in the study (school counsellor). Detailed feedback for all parties involved in the research study was provided.
- Although staff members were greatly not involved in the study, there could have been negativity regarding the research conducted. The researcher was transparent with regards to the purpose, procedure, possible advantages and risks involved in the study as well as the ethical considerations and permission granted to conduct the study.

Any names of educators mentioned by participants during the investigation were asked to remain anonymous. The researcher tried her best to accommodate the needs and concerns of the staff.

- The researcher ensured a professional approach by paying attention to the following precepts: The researcher must be familiar with own biases, assumptions, expectations and values, with regards to the school. The researcher must be empathetic, intelligent, energetic and interested in listening. The researcher must be open to embracing multiple realities. The researcher must be an effective interviewer, moderator and note taker.
- The Grade 10 group of 2013 was not known to or taught by the researcher which helped prevent bias, nor did the researcher have any involvement other than research with the secondary school.
- Participants remained anonymous in the research report as well as to the staff of the secondary school, so as to prevent bias and/or any adverse effects to staff or participants.
- The research proposal was approved by UNISA's ethical committee (Appendix iii).

Unfortunately within focus groups, confidentiality cannot be assured. For this reason the focus group participants were instructed not to use names throughout the sessions; this includes names of participants, educators and schools. They were also reminded at the end of each session to respect each other's privacy and right to anonymity (Rossman & Rallis, 2011:59).

### 3.3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Validity is a situation specific concept, it is dependent on the purpose, population and situational factors in which measurement take place. Instrument validity is the extent to which inferences and uses made on the basis of scores from an instrument are reasonable and appropriate.

The following strategies were used to enhance the validity of this study (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2006:324; Creswell, 2012:243):

- Multi-method strategies
- Participant verbatim language
- Low inference description
- Mechanically recorded data
- Participant researcher
- Member checking
- Negative data

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, or the extent to which the scores are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection. The following strategies have been used to enhance the reliability of this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:184):

- Standard conditions of data collection
- Multiple items on questionnaire
- Single administrator
- Use of counterbalancing instruments
- Heterogeneous sample group

### 3.3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Egwuonwu (2008:59), *“Data analysis is an ongoing process which literally means to take apart words, sentences and paragraphs, which is an important act in the research project in order to make sense of, interpret and theorize data”*. Mc Millan and Schumacher (2006:364) concur with Egwuonwu stating that inductive analysis is an ongoing cyclical process that is integral to all phases of qualitative research.

This involves a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest, in this case the disciplinary system of the secondary school (Flick, 2014:420). There seems to be no standard procedure of analysing data and making sense of the data seems to be primarily dependent on the researcher.



The following strategy was followed:

- Read relevant sources to gain a sufficient background of the problem
- Completion of questionnaires by participants
- Summarised and screened all data collected from the field (questionnaires) for possible ideas and categories in contrast to background information
- Summarised quantitative data in the form of tables and graphs
- Coded and categorised common themes and ideas amongst qualitative data
- Analysed categories to identify patterns and conditions
- Conducted focus group interviews based on identified patterns from questionnaires
- Transcribed interviews. Coded and categorised common themes and ideas
- Tested the themes and categories across the data set (focus groups)
- Synthesised data

#### 3.3.7.1 *QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS*

Analysis of data in a research project involves summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Quantitative research analysis involves factors such as the frequencies of variables, differences between variables, statistical tests designed to estimate the significance of the results and the probability that they did not occur by chance (Hancock 2002:17; Bryman, 2012:564).

In this study a mixed methods approach was used. Although not the primary focus, a certain amount of quantitative data was collected from the questionnaires. Structured questions in the questionnaires had specific predetermined answers which were recorded and analysed. These findings were then presented in the form of tables or graphs.

#### 3.3.7.2 *QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS*

In qualitative research, there may be some data which are measurable and statistically valid but for the most part we are interested in using the data to describe a

phenomenon, to articulate what it means and to understand it (Hancock, 2002:17; Flick, 2014:420).

Content analysis is a procedure for the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation. This involves identifying from the transcripts the extracts of data that are informative (Hancock, 2002:17; Silverman, 2010:439).

Initially the data were divided into three broad categories, namely, possible reasons for poor behaviour amongst learners, strengths and weaknesses of the discipline system, and possible solutions. The procedure involved a series of steps which had been adapted from Mc Millan and Schumacher (2006:367) and Hancock (2002:17):

- All focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed (i.e. recordings were transformed verbatim into typed text) before data was analysed.
- Segmenting involved dividing the data into meaningful analytical units. Such segments (words, sentences or several sentences) were bracketed in order to indicate where they begin and end.
- Each transcript was carefully read. Brief notes were made in the margin about the nature of the information noticed.
- Using the notes in the margin, a list of the different types of information that had been gathered from this transcript was composed.
- The possible linking of some of the categories was considered. They would then be listed as major categories and the original, smaller categories as minor categories.
- The lists of minor and major categories of data were studied, compared to and contrasted with the various categories.
- The next transcript was done and the process repeated. Eventually new categories ceased and the researcher investigated if all the items of relevant and

interesting information could be accommodated in the existing categories. Colour code categories were used to highlight items of data in the transcripts.

- Once the researcher had sorted out all the categories and made sure that all the items of data were in the right category, the researcher looked at the range of categories to see whether two or more categories seemed to fit together. If so, they could form a major theme in the research.
- Now the researcher had the themes, major categories and minor categories clearly sorted, and considered whether any of the previously excluded data was relevant and should be included in the results.
- The frequency with which observations were made was noted in order to help to identify important ideas and prominent themes occurring in the research group as a whole.

The process of content analysis involves continually revisiting the data and reviewing the categorisation of data until the researcher is sure that the themes and categories used to summarize and describe the findings are a truthful and accurate reflection of the data (Hancock, 2002:19; Creswell, 2012:145).

### 3.3.8 DATA INTERPRETATION

Qualitative data have several features to take into consideration. The data was subjective, interpretative, descriptive, holistic and copious (Hancock, 2002:21; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:387). The themes and categories which emerged from the data analysis phase were used to structure the results section of the research report.

The data list (explained in the previous section) containing the main themes from the transcripts, was used as a point of departure. As suggested by Silverman (2010:439), Hancock (2002:21) and Rabiee (2004:658) the following adapted procedure was used to interpret and present data:

- The themes gathered from the data list were presented in sections with the categories as subsections. Categories of data were used to construct a case that the themes are the main findings of the study.
- Key quotations from the various transcripts were selected to illustrate the meaning of the data and to support the findings. A range of quotations were selected to illustrate such features as: the strength of opinion or belief; similarities between respondents; differences between respondents; the breadth of ideas. Careful selection of quotations demonstrates the reliability and validity of the data analysis.
- Links between categories were made to demonstrate how the themes emerged and how conclusions about the findings were drawn.
- Some qualitative data can be dealt with in a quantitative way. If an idea appears in the data frequently it may be feasible to measure how often it appears. It may be feasible or even desirable to present some of the results quantitatively using tables and figures. This was the approach taken in this study.

Using qualitative and quantitative techniques for analysis of data can strengthen the analysis.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter reported on the empirical phase of this study. This included a description of the basic research design, an account of ethical measures and measures to ensure trustworthiness and a description of data collection and data processing methods. In the next chapter, the findings of this empirical investigation will be reported.

# CHAPTER 4-

## PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study was to examine the current discipline problems experienced at a secondary school in Gauteng, as perceived by the learners. The focus of the study involved an in-depth look into the school's disciplinary system and measures taken by the school to keep learners in line. Possible causative factors were investigated in order to gain a better understanding of the challenges learners face (Marais & Meier, 2010:50; Chepkilot & Kiprop, 2011: 272). Each facet of the school system, from school rules to classroom management, were discussed in an attempt to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline system from the point of view of the learners on whom the system is enforced.

### 4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The following research questions informed this study:

- What do learners suggest as causative factors for the manifestation of poor behaviour?
- How do learners perceive the current disciplinary problems at a secondary school in Gauteng?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng as perceived by the learners?
- What improvements to the disciplinary system do the learners suggest?

The answers to these questions could have serious implications for the way in which discipline is implemented within secondary schools. It would appear that often these learners agreed with the strategies the school had put in place, but differed on the way in which these strategies were carried out (Tungata, 2006:11; Lochan, 2012:25).

During the focus group discussions, study participants described their perceptions and experiences of the discipline problems within the secondary school and attempted to explain some of the possible shortfalls within the system.

The research findings that this chapter reports are based on the analysis of the following data sources: school policies, mixed question questionnaires, focus group discussions and a semi-structured in-depth interview.

### 4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The approach taken for this empirical design was that of a mixed method approach, thus both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. As a point of departure the researcher studied the code of conduct and other policies regarding the discipline system at the secondary school (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:356; May, 2011:191). This information, as well as the information obtained from various sources consulted in the literature review in Chapter 2, were utilised in the formation of the mixed question questionnaire.

Participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire in which they were asked various questions regarding their experiences of discipline at school. These questions were closed questions which then asked the respondent to qualify their response with an explanation. This gave rise to both quantitative and qualitative information which could be compared for any discrepancies, thus strengthening validity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010:277). The answers given in the questionnaires also shaped the guidelines for both the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interview.

The focus group discussion attempted to elaborate on the responses obtained earlier in the study through the questionnaires (Silverman, 2010:129). These discussions sparked various ideas regarding possible solutions.

The in-depth interview was used to conclude the work in the field and involved finding an expert (the current principal) on the phenomenon (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010:93).

## 4.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND SAMPLE GROUP

### 4.4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM USED BY THE SCHOOL

The secondary school under investigation currently employ a demerit system whereby learners lose points for every infringement of the rules and gain points for exemplary behaviour (Sprick, 2013:124). The system is implemented as follows (Appendix iv):

Every child is issued with a homework diary at the start of each year. The diary contains a summary of the code of conduct (Appendix iv) and supporting documents which are signed by learners and parents.

In the event of a minor misdemeanour such as arriving late or homework not done, the relevant educator records the infringement in the back of the homework diary and parents sign, to acknowledge they are aware of the problem.

Once three infringements have been recorded, or the homework diary is left at home, the learner is to attend an afternoon detention session with the relevant educator. When a learner reaches five infringements, it is reported to the grade tutor and five demerits are recorded on file.

These demerit points are accumulated and during the third term re-registration process parents are notified of offenses and if needs be, interventions are made. The educators may also phone, write letters or schedule meetings at their discretion with parents for repeat offenders they feel have pushed the boundaries too far and are in need of immediate parental involvement.

The grade tutor may intervene and at her own discretion and with input from the relevant educators, put other strategies in place such as a daily report, temporary class suspension, black book report or detention.

When on daily report the learner has to receive a comment from each educator every day concerning his or her behaviour in class and has to report to the tutor at the end of each day. The black book works much the same as daily report, but is a monitoring tool for the whole class.

Merit points can be earned during the year which “cancel out” the demerits. Merit points are awarded for commendable behaviour, participation in school activities, sports and cultural events and community service.

The last Friday of every month is a jeans-and-t-shirt day whereby learners with fewer infringements are rewarded and are allowed to wear casual clothes. Those who have too many demerits at that stage of the year are excluded and need to wear full school uniform. Demerits are also taken into account when selecting learners for school outings, camps and other such privileges.

More serious offences such as violence, or the use or sale of illegal substances do not follow this route. These offenses are reported straight to the head of department and go on record immediately. Parents are called in for a meeting whereby their child may be suspended pending a school investigation and possible criminal charges (depending on the offense). At this point the police may also be called in to assist.

A disciplinary hearing is scheduled to determine the course of action to be taken. The disciplinary hearing consists of the executive staff, governing body representatives, RCL representatives, the learner, his parents and any witnesses. The outcome of the hearing varies based on the severity and frequency of the offence and may result in measures such as counselling and rehabilitation, to suspension and expulsion. A learner may not be expelled without the permission of the school’s district education department.



#### 4.4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE GROUP

##### 4.4.2.1 GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

The secondary school in Gauteng, central to this research, is an English language school based in Ekurhuleni. The school includes Grade 8 to Grade 12 boys and girls from diverse cultures, religions and socio economic backgrounds. The secondary school is one of the top schools in the area and has maintained exemplary matric results for over a decade.

This study involved three groups of participants all of which are currently involved in the secondary school under study. The questionnaire section of the investigation involved only current Grade 10 learners. It was thought that they had been part of the system for some time and were not only able to give insight into such a system, but that they could still benefit from any changes resulting from the investigation. It was also thought that they were mature enough to answer the questions in a constructive manner. The questionnaire was open to all Grade 10 learners. It was hoped that a variety of learners would participate.

The focus group discussions involved members of the RCL. The RCL is a group of learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12, who have been voted for by the learners at the school to represent their views. The RCL members were asked to elaborate on the findings from the questionnaires. These focus group discussions qualified the findings of the questionnaires and as representatives of the learner population they were able to give insight into and give possible reasons for the discipline problem at the school.

The semi structured interview was conducted with the current principal of the secondary school. The principal was chosen as an expert in the field based on the various roles he has played at the school over the years. He has taught at the school for many years, was the deputy principal and then the principal of the school and as a parent, has had two children at the school. It was hoped that these roles would enable him to give a holistic and comprehensive view of the discipline problems experienced.

#### 4.4.2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study comprised of 70 learners and one principal in total. 60 Grade 10 learners completed the questionnaire and 10 RCL members participated in the focus group discussions. They ranged in age from 14 to 18 and consisted of both male and female participants. The questionnaires were filled in by 33 girls and 27 boys whereas the RCL group discussions involved 4 girls and 6 boys. The semi-structured interview was conducted with the current male principal. Table 1 summarises the demographics of each group.

Table 4.1 Demographics of participants involved in the study.

Group	Gender		Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Average Age
Grade 10	Female	33	15	5	9	6	15
	Male	27	7	3	5	10	16
RCL	Female	4	3	0	1	0	16
	Male	6	3	1	2	0	16
Principal	Male	1	0	0	0	1	

## 4.5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The investigation into the discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng can be divided into four themes.

1. Possible causative factors of learner misbehaviour in a secondary school in Gauteng.
2. Perceived efficiency of the current disciplinary system in a secondary school in Gauteng.
3. Perceived weaknesses of the current strategies used in classroom management at a secondary school in Gauteng.
4. Possible strengths and suggestions to improve the discipline system of a secondary school in Gauteng.

These themes were examined under different sections in both the questionnaire posed to the Grade 10 learners and the focus group discussions held with the RCL representatives.

#### 4.5.1 POSSIBLE CAUSATIVE FACTORS OF LEARNER MISBEHAVIOUR IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN GAUTENG

During the literature study five extrinsic causative factors of behaviour problems were identified. These factors were then broken down into subtopics and learners were asked to judge if in their opinion these factors played a role in the discipline problems experienced at the school and to share their thoughts on each subtopic.

##### 4.5.1.1 HOME ENVIRONMENT

Researchers such as Lanza, Rhoades, Nix and Greenberg (2010:318) and Mestry and Khumalo (2012:106-108) identified the home environment as the system which has the most influence on an individual, seeing that social norms of behaviour are instilled at a young age. It then stands to reason that the home background of individuals will influence their behaviour at school.

Grade 10 learners (75%) agreed that home background is a contributing factor to behaviour problems (Figure 4.6). The respondents (88%) stated that the type of discipline at home had an influence on school learner behaviour (Figure 4.1). The majority also agreed that neglect (87%), the kind of parent-child relationship (78%), exposure to negative role models (78%), family conflict (75%), working parents (65%) and family structure (55%) would also contribute to the behaviour of the learner (Figure 4.1).

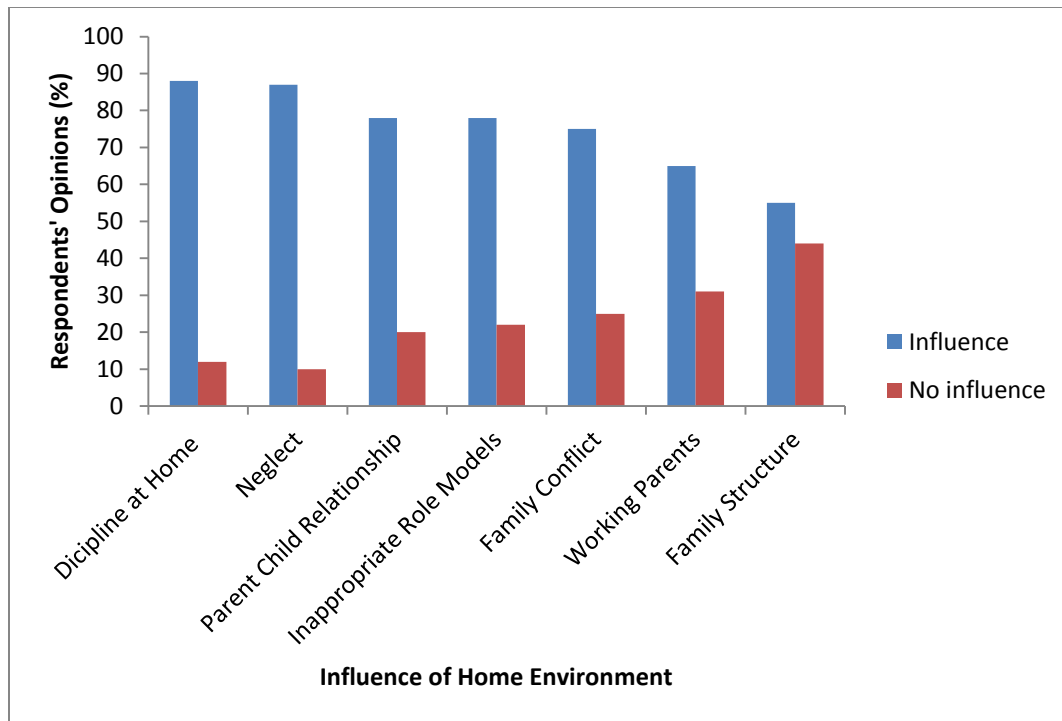


Figure 4.1: Respondents' opinions on the influence that the home environment has on learner behaviour at a secondary in school in Gauteng

During the focus group discussions the RCL representatives agreed that the home environment had a big influence on learner behaviour. The biggest contributing factor to this category was the manner in which one is raised. RLC participant 2 explained that *“if parents are very strict and certain morals are instilled, you as a child adapt to that and learn from that. I think in the outside world you should portray these values.”* RCL participant 1 echoed this by stating that *“kids who misbehave do so because of how they are taught and what they are shown at home, mostly from your parents.”* It was explained that discipline starts at home and that if a learner has no rules or boundaries at home it is difficult for the learner to know what is accepted in a school environment (Figure 4.1). Participants also agreed that difficult home circumstances, such as lack of attention and affection, abuse and neglect negatively influence learner behaviour (Figure 4.1).

The principal was of the opinion that the majority of the school's parents are supportive but that there were a few whose children really disrupt schooling; according to the

principal *“their parents couldn’t care or they thought that their children could never do anything wrong”*. Regarding the naughty kids, he said, *“I think they are naughty a large extent of the time because their parents support them; whatever happens, it’s somebody else’s fault.”* He acknowledges that discipline in schools is becoming significantly more difficult and says *“parents have to take responsibility”*.

The principal is of the opinion that parenting has the biggest influence on children’s behaviour. He suggests that the breakdown in homes in recent times has led to a situation where, *“parents say: this is school, go learn all your morals and stuff there”*. He believes that discipline should start at home and be reinforced at school, but more and more the reverse occurs.

He did end off on a positive note stating *“I think for the majority of people, the idea is still there about good parenting and responsibility, but I think for others, uh, I think the bad parents (minority) may have actually become worse”*.

#### 4.5.1.2 SCHOOL FACTORS

Hargreaves et al. (2012:164) and Kimani (2013:17) note that there may be many factors within the school environment which promote indiscipline in schools. Such factors included educators, class size and school facilities among others. The Grade 10 participants agreed that some of these factors played a role (Figure 4.6). These factors (Figure 4.2) included the type of educator-learner relationship that develops in a classroom (88%), the style of discipline and classroom management the educator employs (84%), the size of the class (78%), the educator’s knowledge of the subject (68%) and the educator as a role model (60%). The Grade 10 learners did not feel that the school facilities influenced behaviour (Figure 4.2).

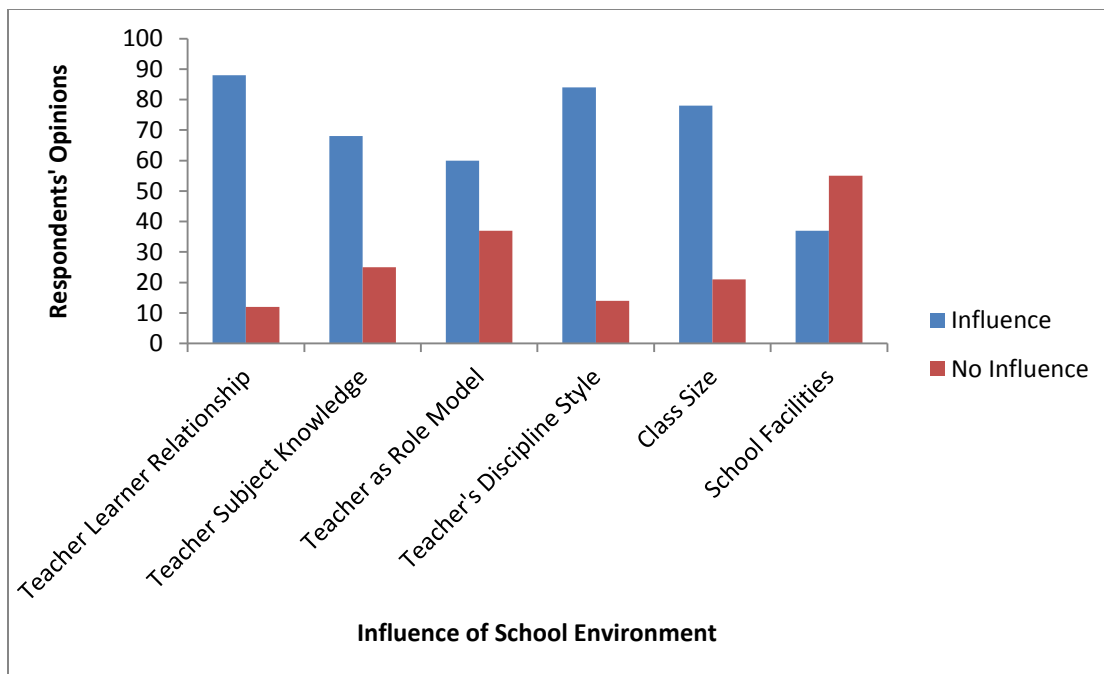


Figure 4.2: Respondents' opinions on the influence that the school environment has on learner behaviour at a secondary school in Gauteng

According to the RCL learners, educators have the biggest influence on learner behaviour within a school environment (Figure 4.2). The educator-learner relationship was stated as the top contributing factor followed closely by the educator's discipline style. Learners stated that the way they were treated in class had a big impact on their behaviour.

RCL respondent 4 stated that *"if there is that personal interaction you kinda feel more inclined not to do badly."* She added that *"it's also about the type of environment that a teacher creates in their class"*. RCL respondent 4 stated that she felt that educators should set an example for the learners they teach, an example that displays respect and genuine interest for a child (Figure 4.2).

RCL respondent 3 was of the opinion that subject knowledge was an important factor and put it like this *"If you are an asset to me I won't fight you as much cause I know I really need you."*

The RCL participants did not believe that school facilities are a source of discipline problems possibly because the school in question has good facilities. They did however state that the reputation of a school may dictate learner behaviour (Figure 4.2).

The principal shared the opinions of the respondents regarding the school environment. In his view educators had a huge impact *“I think we need to be breeding stronger teachers”*. As principal he noted that for some educators *“subject knowledge and all of that is fine, but put them in front of Grade 8s or 9s and they fall apart”*. He felt that *“their ‘stick-ability’ wasn’t there”* and that the learners displayed more perseverance in breaking them down, than the educators did in taking control.

As principal he was concerned about the calibre of his educators and accordingly implemented a program to help educators identify their weaknesses and things that they are possibly doing that create a disruptive environment. *“I think there are three starting points. The first starting point is to take control outside of your class” “the next thing is for teachers to be authentically caring” “the final one is uhm, being prepared”*. In his opinion an authentic educator is an effective educator.

The principal also raised concern regarding class size. *“I think the size of schools has created a bit of a monster” “it’s outrageous the size of schools, there’s a lot more opportunity for things to go wrong”*. Unfortunately there is no easy fix to this challenge.

#### 4.5.1.3 PEERS

As children get older, the family begins to fulfil a less significant role and the influence of peers becomes more prominent (Keijsers, Loeber, Branje & Meeus, 2011:4). It is at this stage that the company kept by individuals becomes vital as friends seem to grow in similar domains (Laursen, Hafen, Kerr & Stattin, 2012:89). It thus stands to reason that peers will influence the type of behaviour learners participate in at school and elsewhere.

The results from the questionnaire completed by the Grade 10 learners concur that peer influence does affect discipline in schools (Figure 4.6). This category was divided into three branches namely the need for status (84%); the need for acceptance (84%) and exposure to bad influences (86%).

It appears that these learners were of the opinion that these factors do indeed influence learner behaviour and that exposure to and incidence of unsavoury influences, increase at secondary schools (Figure 4.3).

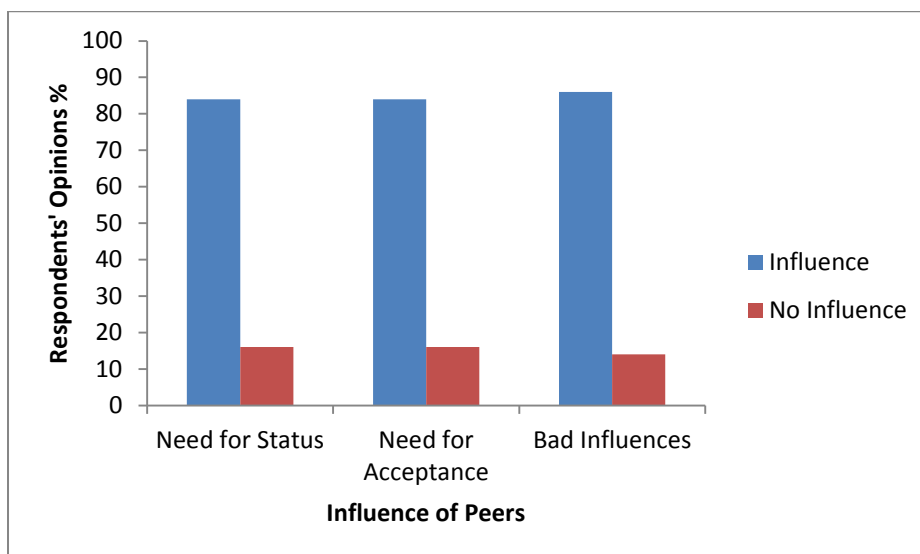


Figure 4.3: Respondents' opinions on the influence that peers have on learner behaviour at a secondary school in Gauteng

The members of the RCL were in agreement stating that peers influence both positive and negative behaviour, but that the negative influence is more prominent in secondary schools (Figure 4.3). RCL participant 3 put it very simply *“if my friends are not behaving, I’m not gonna behave either”*. RLC participant 4 added that *“if you wanna do something wrong, you not gonna do it alone”*. When asked if the peer influence worked in a positive manner as well, the group responded by saying it could but it doesn’t.

RCL participant 5 suggested that the “naughty kids” may have a more dominant personality and that this may be the reason why others follow their behaviour. RCL participant added that adolescence is a time of discovering who one is and that this process involves mixing with different groups and trying different things *“if you mix with a bad group, it’s obvious that you gonna do bad things”*.

The principal explained that during adolescence, children are at a stage of self-exploration, this involves *“mixing with all sorts of other people”*, *“you are going to run*



*into more people with bad morals and bad ideas than good ones*". *"It's part of being a teenager"*. For the learners who have had a stable and supportive upbringing where open communication and acceptance are encouraged, peer pressure plays a minimal role. However, for those learners who do not come from loving homes, who crave attention and acceptance this is a troublesome time, and peer pressure seems to target them. The principal admits *"if somebody in my school wants to find dagga they won't even have to go outside the gates"*. This kind of learner is exposed to *"gang intimidation and things like that"* which can result in long term negative effects.

#### 4.5.1.4 COMMUNITY

The community in which one lives can also impact the development of an adolescent learner and his behaviour. Community norms can dictate behaviour for those with strong ties to the community (Martin & Loomis, 2013:333). This can have a positive or negative effect.

It appears that the Grade 10 learner population is divided in their opinion (Figure 4.6) regarding community influence (56%). This opinion appears to be geographically and culturally based. Of the participants 61% agreed that the area of residence affects behaviour, 59% stated that the community rules and norms transcend the community, 47% thought that being involved in community events would influence behaviour (Figure 4.4). Only 38% agreed that socio-economic standing influences behaviour; 66% were in favour of culture and 65% supported religion as factors that influence behaviour (Figure 4.4).

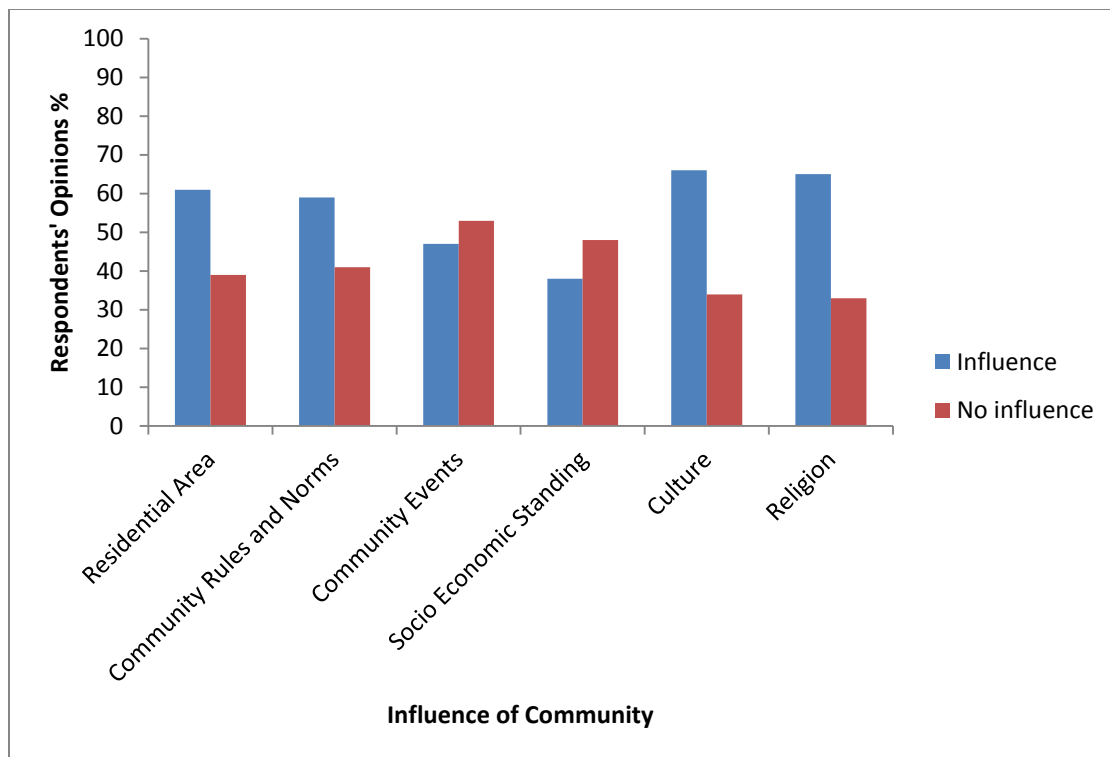


Figure 4.4: Respondents' opinions on the influence that the community has on learner behaviour at a Secondary School in Gauteng

RCL participant 2 stated *"The people who live in Tokoza and Katlehong are different to the people who live in the suburbs because of the influence around them and their area"*. This could imply that certain behaviours are acceptable in some areas but not in others. RCL participant 3 referred to this as the *"mentality behind the community itself"*. He explained it as follows, *"If you sit in a community, even where there have been stabbings and people take a stand, you have a community that will grow, where people are encouraged, where there is development in that community and the schools in that community"*.

It appears that the social norms in a particular community are carried through to the school environment, but that amongst the diversity at this particular secondary school there are many examples of tolerance and acceptance for diversity (Figure 4.4). This cultural mix of learners has to a certain extent made the school a community in itself, with its own norms, rules and values.

According to the principal *“a lot of problems that manifest themselves in this school are not from the school per se”. “They are problems that come from outside”*. These problems, such as substance abuse and violence, have trickled their way into schools. *“I think it’s a lot more easily available,”* said the principal comparing the current situation to his school days.

The principal agreed with RCL respondent 2 stating *“I think the gang type of thing has got quite bad, and that has come in from the poorer areas and has certainly come into the suburbs”*. However, *“we’ve got a very, very good relationship with the police at the moment,”* he said proudly. He is determined that *“there has gotta be a line that we don’t cross”* and that, although the surrounding communities and society at large may be experiencing moral degeneration, there is still some hope for the school.

#### 4.5.1.5 SOCIETY

Society determines what acceptable behaviour is (Ahmad, 2011:3). This message is conveyed through the media and is often subliminal. In this category three questions were asked to which 59% of learners agreed that the rules and norms of South African society influence behaviour in schools; 38% stated that race plays a role and 21% suggested that ethnicity is a factor (Figure 4.5). Overall only 39% of respondents cited society as an influence on school discipline (Figure 4.6), ironic since it is the same society which dictates their code of conduct.

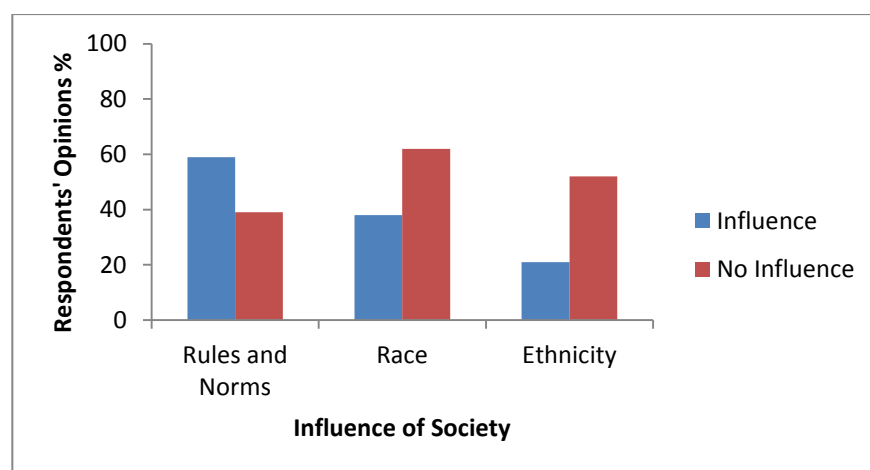


Figure 4.5: Respondents' opinions on the influence that society has on learner behaviour at a secondary school in Gauteng

There was some support amongst the RCL participants stating that society influences behaviour (Figure 4.5). The general consensus was that the messages received from society, via media and the like, desensitise us to the horrors of the world. As RCL participant 5 suggested *“the good child is not normal anymore”*. RCL participant 4 said that the media makes it sound like drugs and violence at schools are the norm- like schools are a “gangsterhood”

The principal had a different view and explains, *“When I grew up your world view was where you lived”*. He has noticed that the world that our children grow up in today is very different to the world adults were accustomed to. Principal: *“I think the world as a whole has changed, and I know this sounds incredibly old-fashioned but I, I think TV has created a major thing...”* *“Now we are bombarded with all sorts of things on TV and we, we kinda get numbed to it”*. *“What would have been a shocking thing, we [are] no longer shocked by, we are no longer shocked by children dying of overdoses”*. *“Things that were unacceptable or frowned upon are no longer”*. He suggests that the society we have become accustomed to has desensitised us and has blurred the lines of right and wrong.

The principal relates this to situations at the school *“when I have sexual immorality that comes into the school, we don’t teach sexual immorality here!”* *“When we have drugs in the school, we don’t grow dagga here ... it comes from the outside, from society!”* He concludes, *“We are on a path of self-destruction”*. *“We have to move back to a path of moral regeneration, where we say that is not acceptable, where parents take responsibility for their children”*.

Another factor raised by the RCL focus group was that of personality and more specifically maturity as supported by Hampson (2012:3). RCL respondent 3 commented *“sometimes it also depends on your personality, maybe you are just simply immature at that stage”*. RCL respondent 4 agreed saying that *“sometimes they just need time to grow up”*. The maturity and stage of development, although not investigated in this part of the study, are intrinsic factors, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2) and will influence learner behaviour and may be an area for further study.

It was agreed by both the Grade 10 and RCL participants that all the identified extrinsic factors influenced the behaviour of the learners at the School in question but that no one factor was responsible for all misbehaviour (Figure 4.6). The influence of peers and a learner's home background appear to have the greatest support (Figures 4.1 and 4.3)

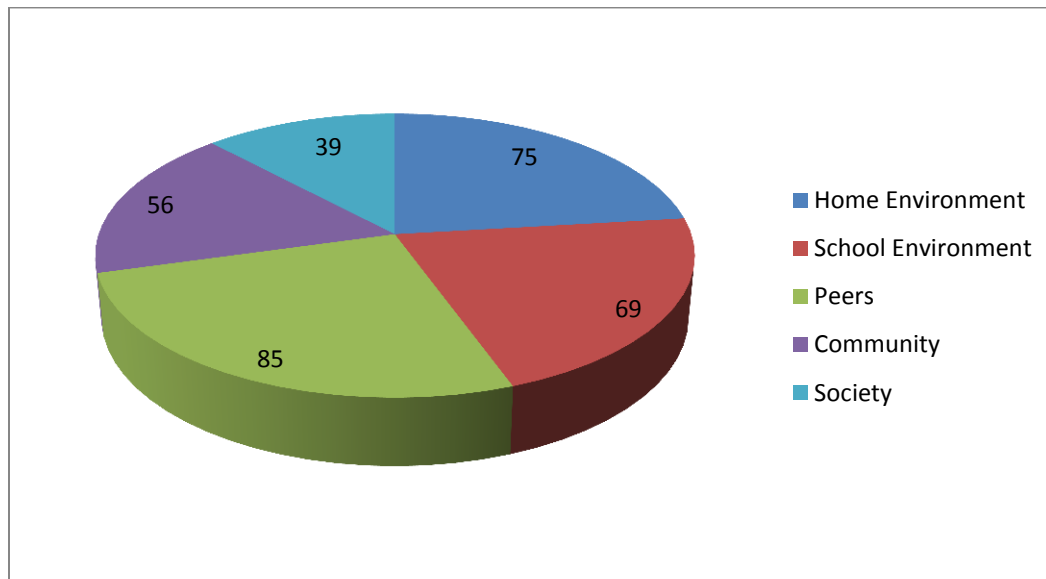


Figure 4.6 Percentage of respondents who concur that the extrinsic factors influence learner behaviour at a Secondary School in Gauteng

#### 4.5.2 PERCEIVED EFFICIENCY OF THE CURRENT DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM

Over the years more and more educators have left the profession due to the indiscipline with which they are faced (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:1). The principal of the secondary school claims *“I think the types of misdemeanours are worse now days...”* *“But I think the percentage of delinquent kids is about the same”*. Do learners feel the same?

This study undertook to record the learners' perspectives regarding discipline problems in schools. Of the Grade 10 learners 71% are of the opinion that learner behaviour at the secondary school, for the most part is acceptable (Figure 4.7). Only 51% of the participants found that the discipline system itself was effective (Figure 4.7).

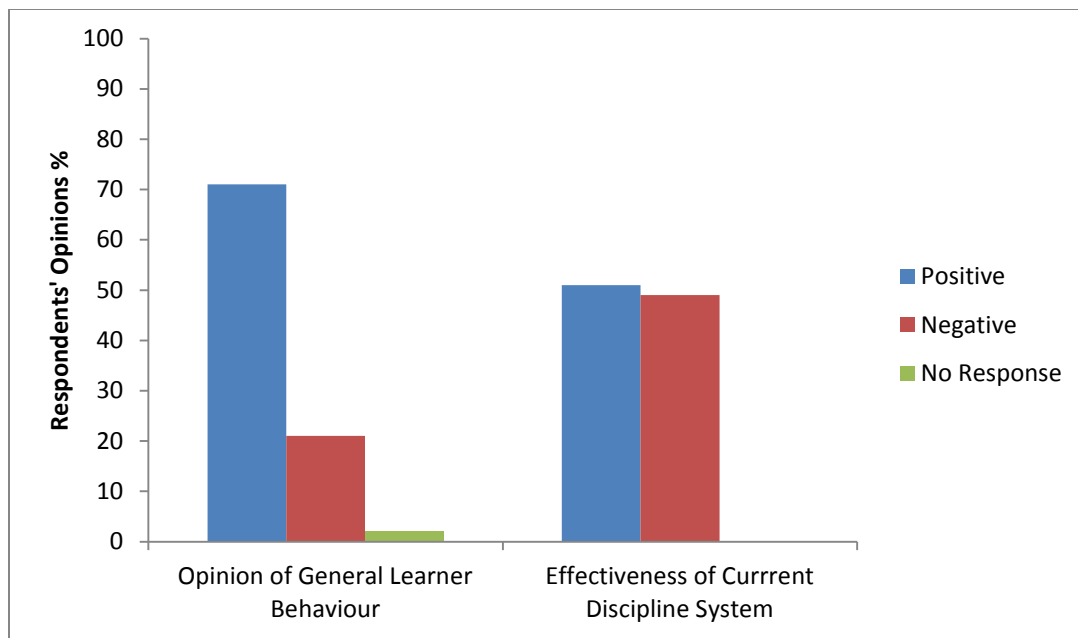


Figure 4.7: Respondents' opinions on the general behaviour of learners and the effectiveness of the current discipline system in a secondary school in Gauteng

Members of the RCL suggested that the majority of the learners at the school were in fact well behaved and followed the rules, but that the few individuals who displayed poor behaviour ruined it for everybody else (Figure 4.7). The RCL members believed that the discipline system was effective for the majority of the learners who are well behaved, but that it fails the learner who has a discipline problem. As RCL respondent 5 stated *"the effectiveness of the system depends on the type of learner"*. RCL respondent 4 explained *"it works for the child who actually doesn't want to be naughty, but then for the child that doesn't care, it's not going to work. Our system is not harsh enough for those children"*.

The RCL members raised concerns that within the system there is no follow-up and that this leads to the breakdown of discipline (Sackey, 2013:7). RCL participant 1 stated *"I guess there are some flaws in the system"*. These flaws allow for misbehaviour to go undetected for too long. RCL participant 3 echoed this, saying *"there's a lot of leeway; you can get away with doing a lot of bad things"*. RCL participant 4 believes *"the consequences need to be harsher"*.

It was explained that there was little clarity regarding the system and procedures taken amongst the learners. All members could explain how demerits were accumulated but nobody knew what happened once a certain number of demerits were reached. All learners knew that serious infractions resulted in a disciplinary hearing but few could explain what the hearing entails. It was suggested by the RCL members that other learners may also be unsure of how the system actually works and what the consequences are.

The principal claimed “*we are pretty good reactively*” but that if he had the resources his focus would be “*proactive rather than reactive*”. He was under the impression that the current discipline system was effective, “*ninety percent of the kids it works for*”, but that for the more difficult learners it failed.

The principal believed that the tutor or grade head system worked but acknowledges that the “*demerit system... kids are not worried about it*”. He claims “*detention still works, when you can get to them... they hate having their time taken*”. He stated that the black book for classes is still relatively effective.

“*Disciplinary hearings, suspension, expulsion... these are all effective strategies but to get to that process is such a mission*”. He added “*there’s a lot of red tape*” and that the manpower required in these cases is just not available.

Another concern for the principal, which was not raised by the RCL and falls under intrinsic factors, was “*the education system doesn’t really cater for every child – we are trying to fit this whole world into one sausage mould*”. He referred specifically to “*kids who cannot cope in this environment, kids that shouldn’t be going through this system ... “there should be more special schools, we need more Randeors and more School of Achievement*”.

In an attempt to help weaker learners “*we had in the past streamed one or two classes, weak academic classes, and we found by streaming them together we created a behaviour problem*”. Thus weaker and stronger academic candidates are expected to work at the same pace, which for some is not possible.

### 4.5.3 PERCEIVED WEAKNESS OF THE CURRENT STRATEGIES USED IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The most common classroom management strategies used at the secondary school were identified and examined. Each strategy's effectiveness was assessed (Figure 4.8), and the strengths and weaknesses discussed. As can be seen parental involvement (93%) was thought to be the most effective strategy and demerits (49%) the least effective (Figure 4.8).

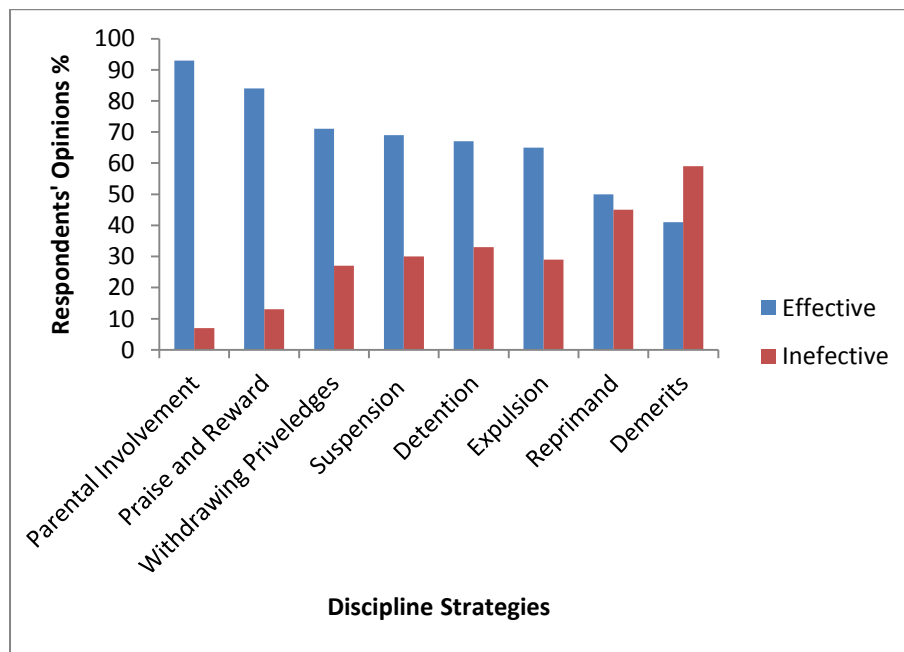


Figure 4.8: Respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of various discipline and classroom strategies used in a secondary school in Gauteng

#### 4.5.3.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement was seen as the most effective strategy (Figure 4.8). This involvement ranged from sending letters home, to sending an sms or calling a parent, to asking parents to come in for a meeting and inviting parents to sit in on the class (Manning & Bucher, 2012:232-246; Bowen, 2010:1).

The most effective of these seems to be calling parents or arranging meetings. RCL participant 4 explained that "*parents don't read, they just sign*", but RCL participant 6 recalled how having an educator phone his mother was very effective, "*She phoned my*



*mother saying I hadn't done homework and I had an attitude on top of it, then I got even more trouble. I won't be doing that again".*

RCL participant 1 did not agree; he felt that the effectiveness of parental involvement was based on the calibre of parent, *"some parents don't have time to get involved with the child and some parents maybe don't care"*. RCL respondent 2 explained that parental involvement is effective (Figure 4.8), but it takes too long to get to that point *"I can get away with so much without my parents knowing about it. I'll do it cause I know they won't find out and that's who I'm scared of getting into trouble with."*

Some respondents raised concern that calling a parent at work would just be an irritation and would hinder positive results. For the most part the RCL was in agreement that phoning parents is an effective strategy for managing learner behaviour if used in the correct manner (Figure 4.8).

The principal agreed that parental involvement in school discipline was very important but commented that *"I think a lot of the time, with the naughty kids the school is not supported by the parents"*. Without this support very little change can ensue, *"parents have to take responsibility"*.

The principal acknowledged that the sms system had been suggested before, but had this to add *"I prefer to pick up a phone and talk to them. For me a sms becomes a little impersonal"* *"I don't want to get to a point where my machine talks to your machine about your child's behaviour"*. He did however agree *"but there might be a place for it"* in the future.

#### 4.5.3.2 PRAISE AND REWARD

Praise and reward was ranked the second most effective strategy in classroom management (Figure 4.8). RLC respondent 3 explains *"it depends on how great the value is of the reward, it must be meaningful"*. Others added that the reward should be a challenge that is achievable to keep the learners motivated.

It was explained that learners need that recognition and motivation from educators (Pakaslahti, Karajalainen, Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002:140; Bear, 2012:101). RCL

respondent 4 states *“just telling someone that you’re proud of them can do wonders”*. She also warns though, that the praise should be fair, based on merit and continuous. Of the respondents, 84% agreed with her (Figure 1.8). This strategy focuses more on the positive than the negative aspects and in so doing promotes a positive environment, one where learners work towards a goal rather than avoiding a punishment (Nelsen, 2011:11).

RCL respondent 3 said *“I don’t understand why you should praise me for something that’s expected”*. RCL respondent 2 replied, *“It motivates other students to do better than you, like competition all the time”*. RCL respondent 5 added that *“the reward should show kids that being the good child is better than being naughty”*.

The principal recalled a situation in which the educator had sent a group of children to his office not explaining to them that it was for good work. The children naturally thought that they were in trouble and sheepishly walked into his office expecting to be scolded. *“They came in and I congratulated them, and that had such meaning”* the principal said. *“It was excellent! And next time they’ll work harder”* he exclaimed.

The principal stated *“I also think that certain people will respond to that; other people won’t ... A child who is obsessively defiant, my experience is having given them positive reinforcement means nothing to them”*.

#### 4.5.3.3 WITHDRAWING PRIVILEGES

Ranking at number three on the list of most effective discipline strategies, at 71%, was withdrawing privileges (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 1 claimed *“it depends on how important that privilege is to you”*. It was said by the group that, as with praise and reward (Section 4.5.3.2), withdrawing privileges only works if the reward or privilege is seen as such (Tungata, 2006:20; Gilham, 2012:3).

RCL respondent 1 used himself as an example stating *“if I’m told I can’t play this certain sport because I misbehaved, then it will hit me because then I’m like wow, I really enjoyed doing this and I’ll have to work harder and push myself so I will be able to participate again”*.

RCL respondent 3 claimed *“if I can’t wear civvies or black t-shirt anymore because I have too many demerits, it’s like cool, life goes on, I’ll be disappointed but not enough to make me work”*.

With this in mind, the group agreed (Figure 4.8) that a greater motivation for change is to be excluded from outings or fun days or sports, than to be rewarded with wearing civvies. It was also stated that shortening break time is quite effective.

The principal suggested that the learners *“hate having their time taken”*. With this in view, he decided that every time there was new graffiti the whole school would stay in class at break until he had finished painting over it. Needless to say, taking away break time solved the graffiti problem!

#### 4.5.3.4 SUSPENSION

Suspension occurs in two ways, in school suspension and out of school suspension. In school suspension involves coming to school, but being isolated from the general school population (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2014:187). In this instance the learner is placed under the supervision of the grade tutor or head of department and is not allowed to class or break. The learner is then required to complete the work given without assistance (Waterville School, 2012:36; Chen, 2008:3). Out of school suspension means that the learner is not allowed on the school premises and is required to complete the necessary school work under parental supervision.

In school suspension is usually for less severe cases of truancy or insolence. Out of school suspension is usually given in severe cases, for instance assault or the use or sale of illegal substances. Usually this suspension is followed by a disciplinary hearing. In both cases parents are notified of the school’s decision (Appendix v).

Of the Grade 10 respondents 69% agreed that suspension is an effective strategy (Figure 4.8). The RCL focus group supported these findings but felt that suspension was effective more because parents are notified, than because the learner is excluded as is supported in Figure 4.1.

RCL respondent 4 raised concerns that, school suspension is not always fair, in the case of truancy, and that it is not effective if the learners are suspended with their friends, or are not under strict supervision. She also suggested *“if you gonna suspend someone for fighting for five days I think the person should really go and talk to... counsellor or anger management or something like that”*.

RCL respondent 1 claimed that suspension works for two reasons *“because, the fact that now my parents are gonna find out what I did, it scares me, so you understand, you realise wow, this is serious. Another reason, the fact that it rarely happens, it’s not some everyday thing, so when it happens you realise wow, this is serious stuff, or I’m gonna have a disciplinary hearing, wow, this is real now I’m in big trouble”*.

Again the principal agreed with the RCL (Figure 4.1), stating that when the parents supported the school, then a temporary class suspension was more than enough to make the learner realise the error of their ways. However, parents that did not react or that defended their children, often rendered suspension a fruitless exercise.

#### 4.5.3.5 DETENTION

Detention is seen as the detainment of a learner for a period of time in response to poor behaviour (Sprick, 2013:124). Detentions are organised by the respective class educators own discretion or after three infringements have been recorded in the homework diary (Appendix v). Detentions may be held during break times or after school and they may be for select individuals or the entire class. In any event children are given 24 hour notice in order to make alternative arrangements for lunch or transport. It is recorded and details are given in the learner’s homework diary so that parents are aware of the situation. Whole school detentions are held by the principal on a Friday afternoon, whereby a week’s notice is given.

This is one of the most commonly used strategies and yet only 67% of the Grade Ten respondents found it to be effective (Figure 4.8). The RCL had this to say:

RCL respondent 1: *“People don’t back it up, ma’am! Like a teacher can give me detention for next week Friday and then she just forgets, so I won’t go.”*

RCL respondent 6: *“When I was on detention, the teacher was like just sweep and then you can leave. If a teacher says that, some kids won’t do their homework, they get a detention, they sweep, and it’s not much work if they just get a detention”*

RCL respondent 2 *“ For detention you just go to the class, sit and do nothing, if they make us do gardening or something at the school.... You feel the impact, you won’t not do your homework again, but if you just gonna come and sit, it doesn’t bother me, I have an hour free, its fine...”*

RCL respondent 5 *“It’s like an advantage sometimes because you can do your homework and when you get home you can watch TV ... They should make you do like dishes in the staff room, like we all hate dishes. ... Detention isn’t really a scary or a bad thing anymore”.*

RCL respondent 3 *“When you have to go for detention, that means you miss one hour of sports, if you miss practice you know you gonna be in big trouble, fitness increases and all those harsh things increase.”*

RCL respondent 5 *“I think the time of the detention... like if it’s after school you just gonna ditch and if you don’t go they just gonna shout at you. If it’s break detention they can find you and it’s taking away a privilege, I think that’s gonna make you do your homework more”.*

The conclusion is that detention itself is not a poor method of disciplining learners, but rather the way in which detention has been executed, determines its success. If detentions were followed up and included some form of physical labour, they may be more of a deterrent to poor behaviour.

The principal supported detentions as a strategy for maintaining discipline stating *“detention still works, if they come”*. As RCL respondents 1 and 5 explained, in the case of after school detention some learners just do not arrive and this needs to be followed up by the educator responsible. Although there are loopholes regarding detentions, it is still considered an effective strategy by educators and learners (Figure 4.8).

#### 4.5.3.6 EXPULSION

The process of expulsion is quite a lengthy one and is only considered as a last resort. This is only an option for learners who have a history of misbehaviour and for whom all other options have been exhausted (Kim, 2011:91; Western Cape Government, 2014). The process involves collecting supporting documentation of previous infringements, records of disciplinary meetings held and interventions attempted to help the learner.

At a final disciplinary hearing, the decision is made to request permission for expulsion from the local education district. Only once the district has approved such a measure may the school proceed. The learner at this point has the option of appealing the decision or taking a transfer to another school.

RCL respondent 2 stated *“If I was told, listen if you don’t do this and this, this will happen an amount of times and then I’m going to expel you. Then I wouldn’t want that, so as long as the message is maintained I’d behave, so it should work”*. Of the Grade 10 respondents 65% stated that expulsion is an effective measure (Figure 4.8), but the RCL respondents did not seem to agree.

There was consensus that punishments need to be harsher, but according to the RCL group expulsion did not correct the behaviour, it just moved the problem elsewhere (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010:17-21). All were in agreement that having one person who disrupted teaching expelled would improve the discipline of the class, and possibly scare others into submission, but expelling that one learner would not help him (Figure 4.8).

The principal explained *“when they are expelled, they are not out of the system, in fact the head of department, gives them another place in another school”*. In his experience *“unfortunately the problems seem to follow those kids”*. As the RCL said, it appears that expulsion improves the classroom situation but that the learner is in a worse position. Sadly the principal admits *“there are kids that do fall out of the system”*.

#### 4.5.3.7 REPRIMAND

When a learner’s inappropriate behaviour is identified and corrected verbally by an educator we say they have been reprimanded. This may take the form of giving

commands, calling a learner, making eye contact or giving signals to the learner to stop the inappropriate behaviour (Sprick, 2013:116). Too often this involves shouting.

This strategy is immediate and if utilised correctly can be very effective; however, it is often used in anger and incorrectly whereby its effects are short lived, often hindering discipline further (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013:115). The Grade 10 respondents concurred with these findings (Figure 4.8).

The RCL members had a lot to say regarding the “do’s and don’ts” and it appears that generally they agree with the findings above (Figure 4.8).

RCL respondent 4 explained *“Ma’am I think if a teacher reprimands you in front of the class and they embarrass you, you gonna be like yoh, I’m never gonna do this again, but then a part of you is gonna have resentment to that teacher”*.

RCL respondent 5 agreed and added *“Rather pull me outside and we speak, then I will understand and I won’t want to make a big scene for my friends”*

*“It shouldn’t always be a screaming battle, talking to learners and helping them understand the problem works ... teachers need to remain professional, if you lose it in front of a class you lose respect ... rather help me to understand what I did wrong and what I should have done instead,”* RCL respondent 4 commented.

According to RCL respondent 3 *“it depends on the teacher. If a teacher who has dominance in her class and shouts at you then you know you have crossed the line. If she doesn’t have that dominance and she shouts it’s the same story tomorrow ... It’s five minutes of being shouted at and then it’s over and forgotten”*

RCL respondent 1 had a different view, *“I think it’s got to do with the type of environment you grow up in. If you are in an environment where you are constantly being shouted at and there was always screaming in the house then it’s really nothing to you.”* Respondent 4 and 5 agreed.

Based on the opinions above it seems that the respondents feel that reprimanding a learner, if done in a constructive manner can be effective (Figure 4.8). This involves a

calm explanation of the inappropriate behaviour and an opportunity to practice the correct behaviour in a non-threatening environment.

The principal was of the opinion that an educator who shows genuine concern and interest in the learner would not have to raise their voice (Section 4.5.1.2). The authentic educator would be able to talk with a learner to find a solution as suggested by RCL respondent 5. He then commented *“having said all that, there are teachers that go in there being in authority first, uhm, and that works for them, it doesn’t, work for me... but everybody’s gotta find their own feet”*.

#### 4.5.3.8 DEMERITS

The demerit system is a system of accumulated points (Lake, Bowen, Demeritt, McCullough, Haimson & Gill 2012:92). Everybody starts with a hundred points and points are deducted for every infraction of the rules. Some infringements are higher in value and weighting than others. Every infringement is recorded in the homework diary which in turn is recorded in the learner profile. Points can be earned back in the form of merits for exceptional performance in a particular field (Appendix v).

During the re-registration process parents are made aware of the number of demerits a learner has. Those with too many infringements attend a meeting (informal hearing) with the grade tutor whereby interventions are put in place and the learner is given a trial period. Should there be no improvement harsher punitive measures are sought.

The Grade 10 respondents (59%) felt that this strategy was ineffective (Figure 4.8). Based on the findings from the questionnaires conducted, the demerit system had the least support of all strategies (Figure 4.8). The RCL respondents had the same view.

RCL respondent 1 explained *“you can keep signing the diary and for some people it doesn’t matter”*. RCL respondent 4 echoed this stating *“they given out like sweets; it’s not something that’s taken seriously”*. It appears that demerits no longer have an impact on learners as there do not seem to be any consequences at home or at school.

RCL respondent 4 claims *“It would be better if we had a better understanding of what happens and what the procedure is when certain demerits are accumulated, and then*



*maybe it would deter you from getting all those infringements*". Although all learners knew that demerit points were accumulated, nobody was clear as to what the next step is.

RCL respondent 1 suggested *"with the demerit system... you accumulate and accumulate and then you get a detention and more detention, maybe after a certain number we should have harsher penalties"*. This was a commendable suggestion which raises more questions: where is that limit; what penalties would be considered harsh enough and does the school have the personnel to implement such a system?

The principal was able to see the shortcomings of the demerit system and agreed *"the naughty kids don't care"*. He was however under the impression that for the majority of the school population (good learners) it did still work. According to the RCL and from the questionnaire responses (Figure 4.8), it appears that demerits are not as effective as the educators had thought.

#### 4.5.4 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS/ STRENGTHS OF THE SYSTEM

To conclude the study in the field learners were asked how they thought the current discipline system could be improved (Glenn, 2012). The Grade 10 learners were asked to rank what they believed to be in most need of review. Of the respondents 38% ranked consequences as the number one aspect of the disciplinary system in need of revision; 36% believed that the rules needed to be reviewed and 26% felt that the procedures should be reconsidered (Figure 4.9).

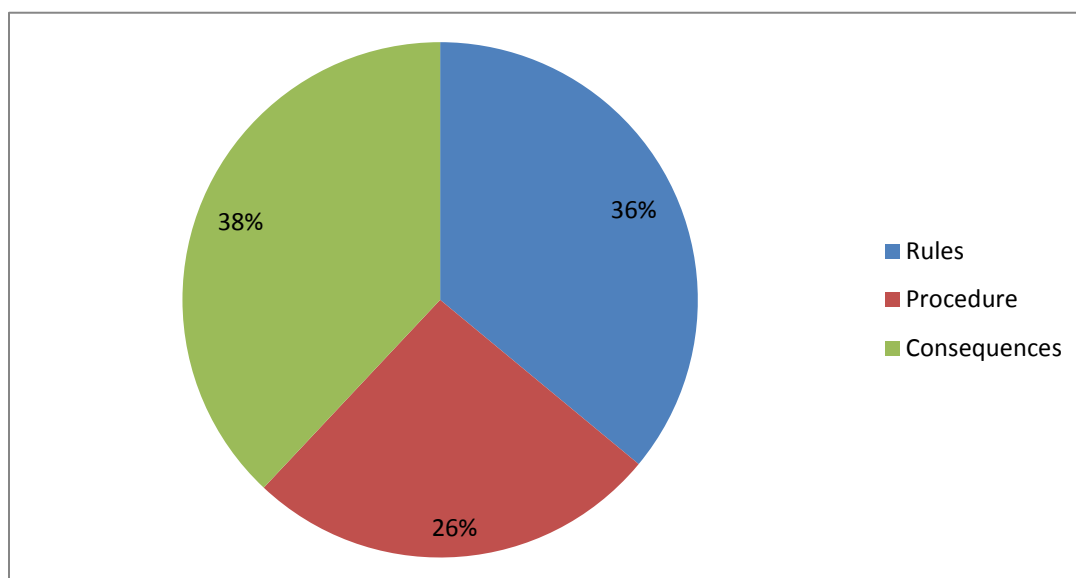


Figure 4.9: Aspects of the current discipline system which learners believed were in most need of attention

The focus group discussions held with members of the RCL reinforced this opinion (Figure 4.9) and provided various simple strategies which could be implemented. The most notable suggestion was that of “following up”. RCL respondent 2 stated *“also just following up a lot ... makes a big difference.”* RCL respondent 1 agreed saying *“they don’t back it up and check that they follow through”*.

The problem seems to arise especially when detentions and demerits are given. According to the learners, the educator often forgets to make an arrangement which gives learners the impression that they can get away with it. RCL respondent 4 shouted *“Double check!”* It was said that if educators followed up as intended that the procedures currently in place could be sufficient (Kimani, 2013:17). Perhaps instead of changing the system, management needs to look at ways to make it more efficient?

The next suggestion was that of reviewing the consequences (Figure 4.9). RCL respondent 3 explained *“you can get away with not doing your homework 20 times and nothing will happen, I think that’s a lot”*.

The group was in agreement that the more demerits accumulated, the harsher the consequences should be, but were uncertain of a method in which to implement such a system. RCL respondent 4 claimed *“it can be improved by increasing the punishment ...*

*it should be more than just one afternoon detention ... consequences need to be harder ...demerits are given like free sweets*". RCL respondent 1 echoed this idea saying *"there should be no mercy at all ... harsher penalties are needed"*. But what does this entail?

Suggestions of harsher punishments were given by members, most including manual labour. Many of these penalties were related to detentions, as it was said earlier that detention has become almost like a free period. RCL respondent 2 suggested *"they should make us do gardening or something at the school"*. RCL respondent 5 added, *"They should make you do like the dishes in the staffroom, like we all hate dishes!"*

RCL respondent 3 explained *"after school detention means you miss out on an hour of sport"* and that for children who are serious about their sport it is a good enough motivator. RCL respondent 5 disagreed saying *"if you get detention at first and second break, that's harsh"*. She added *"some teachers are harsh with their punishment but some teachers aren't ... like sanding desks or scraping off gum"*. With this in mind, perhaps to begin with, a learner who does not comply with the code of conduct should start with one break detention, then two and then an afternoon. As the number of demerits increases, so the time spent in detention increases.

When discussing classroom management and the effect of the educator (Figure 4.2) on a class, the RCL suggested positive reinforcement in the form of praise and reward to be more effective than reprimand which is in line with the findings from the questionnaire (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 5 said that *"the more often a teacher shouts the less effective she is"*. RCL respondent 4 claimed *"talk to me and help me understand why I was wrong"*.

According to the RCL respondents, learners needed to be encouraged and as RCL respondent 2 stated *"you should be rewarded for what you do because then it motivates other students to do better"*. RCL respondent 5 said *"they have to show you that being a good child is better than being a bad child."*

RCL respondent 4 said that this could be accomplished if the educator shows *"general interest in you"* and is equal and fair in her praise or punishment (Section 4.5.). Rewards

should also be meaningful. She also suggested better and more consistent communication between school and home (Figure 4.1).

RCL respondent 4: *"I think they should actually explain the discipline system in the beginning to everyone"* (Glenn, 2012). She would also like to ensure *"constant communication with parents, not only when things go wrong"*. It was suggested by RCL respondent 3 *"better communication with parents, like maybe an sms system"* (Figure 4.7). This suggestion sparked some brainstorming and it was suggested that if the demerits recorded in the homework diary were done away with and instead minor misdemeanours such as late coming or incomplete homework received a sms, that parental involvement would increase as a whole and learner behaviour would improve.

There appeared to be a lot of support for the learner-centred approach (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 2013:27). RCL respondent 3 stated *"I think if the demerit system wasn't about catching the child out, but more as a, ok, he made a mistake, how are we going to work together as teacher and pupil to help him through this?"... So rather than find a punishment, try and help them*". For example, *"if you gonna suspend someone for fighting they should go for counselling too"*. The RCL focus group was in agreement with this strategy but questioned how it could work with the vast numbers of learners.

The principal felt that *"disciplining difficult children is hard work, when in actual fact we should be focussing on the 98% of the kids who are good"*. In reality the behaviour problems take up more of an educator's time than the learners who are deserving of his attention. *"I can see the problems. I don't know what the solution is ... [Perhaps] "if we more readily had disciplinary hearings..."* this may deter learners from misbehaving for fear of parental involvement (Figure 4.8).

The principal stated that he would like *"develop a preventative system ... If I had the resources, I could hire a professional to assess every child on entry and identify possible problems before they occur"*. Unfortunately resources are minimal and with the vast number of learners efficiency may be substandard.

The principal explained his view on the tremendous influence society has on our learners. As a solution he suggests *"we should be focussing on morals. That's what we*

*should be teaching ... Currently the curriculum time allocation does not allow for the concepts of manners, morals and values in the depth that is required to make a difference".* The principal commended Lead SA saying *"Lead SA I think is a very positive thing and I think we need more."* Lead SA is an organisation which encourages all South Africans, through the media, to "lead the way" by displaying responsible behaviour and promoting working together, to make South Africa a better place for all.

The principal also commented that over the years he has observed learners at the school who cannot contend with mainstream schooling. He said the need was for *"more special schools to accommodate learners who cannot cope in mainstream classes [and] greater parent support and involvement"* for all learners. The principal suggested, *"I think what might be useful for universities when they are doing teacher training, is to actually do a longer teacher training, maybe two months at a stretch kinda thing"*.

## 4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings of the study. These findings are based primarily on the analysis of questionnaires and are supported by the transcripts of the focus group and interviews conducted during the course of the study. Findings were discussed in four parts that correspond with the major themes that emerged from the data.

- The first section focussed of causative factors of disciplinary problems in which the home environment and peer influence were the biggest factors.
- The second section questioned the effectiveness of the current disciplinary system, where it was agreed that the system was effective for the average child but not severe enough for the child with behavioural problems.
- The third section investigated different discipline management strategies in which it was found that parental involvement was the most effective, followed by praise and reward and withdrawal of privileges.
- The final section looked at a means of improving the system. It was said that the consequences needed to be harsher, including parental involvement at earlier

stages. It was also suggested that educators engage in better follow up and control of discipline measures. There was also some support for behaviour modification programs within the discipline system.

In Chapter 5 conclusions emanating from the study will be presented. Recommendations to improve the discipline problems experienced at the secondary school as well as recommendations to improve the current discipline system will be made.

The limits of the study will be reported on, as well as proposals made for further research.

# CHAPTER FIVE-

## CONCLUSION AND

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the learners' perspectives of the discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng. Four fundamental questions framed this research:

- What do learners suggest as causative factors for the manifestation of poor behaviour?
- How do learners perceive the current disciplinary problems at a secondary school in Gauteng?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the disciplinary system at a secondary school in Gauteng as perceived by the learners?
- What improvements to the disciplinary system do the learners suggest?

The research questions were answered by themes that emerged from the questionnaires, focus groups and interview data and were reported in Chapter 4.

The aims of this research were to undertake a study of the relevant literature to consider the causative factors associated with discipline problems in secondary schools; to conduct an investigation to determine how the discipline system was perceived by the learners; to establish how effective the various discipline strategies are in maintaining discipline and to make recommendations on how the discipline system can be improved based on the literature review and on the empirical research findings.

This chapter will review, analyse, and discuss (in light of the relevant literature) the findings of this study. In this chapter conclusions will be drawn, as well as

recommendations for improvement and further study to be made. The limitations of this study will also be highlighted.

## 5.2 CONCLUSIONS

### 5.2.1 SUMMARY FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two focused on understanding the various factors which influence the effectiveness of discipline systems implemented in secondary schools. The literature review focused on four aspects of school discipline, the findings of which are summarised below.

#### 5.2.1.1 *CAUSATIVE FACTORS OF BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS*

Brain dysfunction, physical impairment and barriers to learning are intrinsic factors that affect learner behaviour as certain impairments make it difficult for learners to grasp social rules (Fletcher, 2012:8). Other intrinsic factors to be considered are those of personality and temperament, as well as developmental level and basic needs as suggested by the theories of Erikson and Maslow (Bergin & Bergin, 2014:44, 251). It can thus be said that intrinsic factors will influence and be influenced by the environment in which the individual functions.

The extrinsic factors included in this study are the home environment, school environment, the community and society in which one functions and the influence of peers (Fleming et al. 2010:670; Tungata, 2006:11). Each of these environments plays a role in the development of one's identity and as such will influence social norms. The home environment is the primary socialising domain (Fleming et al. 2010:670). As children get older the influence of peers becomes more prominent (Keijsers, Loeber, Branje & Meeus, 2011:4). The educator-learner relationship can influence a learner's school experience and affect a learner's perception of him/herself and the world around them (Bowen, 2010:2).



The community in which one lives has an impact on the social development of a learner. Through social interaction with others who are similar, children learn acceptable behaviour (De Wit et al. 2000:3; Ahmad, 2011:3).

#### 5.2.1.2 *APPROACHES TO MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS*

In the past traditional methods of disciplining learners followed a zero tolerance strategy (Bear, 2012:4; Wolfe & Wilson, 1997:12). In recent times, since the abolishment of corporal punishment in 1997, there has been a shift in which learners are guided to constructive behaviour (De Witt & Lessing, 2013:13).

The positive approach works on the principle of reciprocated respect (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2008:37; Samuels, 2010). This approach requires the development of good educator-learner relations (Bowen, 2010:1).

The Adlerian approach attempts to understand the context of the poor behaviour in order to be proactive. This approach helps to meet the needs fulfilled by inappropriate behaviour, in a more appropriate way (Nelsen, 2011:11).

The student-centred approach helps learners to take ownership of their environment by learning to self-regulate and being aware of the boundaries and expectations (Chen, 2008:7; Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 2013:27).

In behavioural theory, behaviour follows a pattern of antecedent, behaviour and consequence. In this approach the antecedent is manipulated to prevent the behaviour or the behaviour may become extinct by the manipulation of the consequences (LeeFon, Jacobs, Le Roux, & De Wet, 2013:5).

A combination of these approaches may resolve many of the discipline problems experienced in the secondary school, as it caters for a greater number of learners' needs.

#### 5.2.1.3 *STRATEGIES USED IN MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS THEREOF*

In any classroom there are a variety of learners from many different walks of life. These learners do not behave in a uniform manner and it thus stands to reason that various strategies will have to be used to maintain classroom discipline.

As reported in the literature review, there are many strategies available to educators ranging in intensity. Such measures include reinforcing positive behaviour (Bear, 2012:101); tactical ignoring of unwanted behaviour; verbal and non-verbal interventions (Bowen, 2010:3); using light humour to redirect focus (Sprick, 2013:118); reprimanding a learner for inappropriate behaviour (Sprick, 2013:118) and the demerit system (Lake, Bowen, Demeritt, McCullough, Haimson & Gill, 2012:92).

Others include revoking privileges (Gilham, 2012:3); detention (Sprick, 2013:124); parental involvement (Manning & Bucher, 2012:232-246); suspension (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2014:187); expulsion (Western Cape Government, 2014) and alternative schools with specialised learning programs (Kim, 2011:91) amongst others.

Various strategies need to be implemented to deal with the variety of learners. As reported, each discipline strategy has positives and negatives; there is no one strategy that can be used in every situation (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012). It is important to ensure that the strategies used to discipline learners do not take away from the positive relationship and environment that you as an educator are attempting to create (Marais & Meier, 2010:42).

#### 5.2.1.4 *THE EFFECTS OF POOR DISCIPLINE ON A SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNER*

The effects of poor discipline have far-reaching consequences for all learners, not only those who misbehave. Indiscipline affects the whole school moral and the holistic development of learners. The effects of indiscipline can be seen in the academic, emotional and social fields.

It can be seen that an increase in indiscipline in schools often corresponds with poor academic competence (Herrenkohl et al. 2010; McCarty & McCauley, 2010:656). III-

disciplined learners are less likely to succeed academically and are likely to make it difficult for others to succeed. Constant distractions and negative peer influence make it difficult for learners to stay on the right path (Stang & Story, 2005:4; Lanza, Rhoades, Nix & Greenberg, 2010:327). Poor academic performance also lowers self- esteem.

Adolescents struggle for independence and the establishment of their own identity (Pakaslahti, Karajalainen, Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002:140; Mannheim, 2011:2). For a learner who has been labelled, the label becomes a status leading to greater experimentation of undesirable behaviour as they develop an identity (Morgan & Huebner, 2009:370; Hampson, 2012:3). Individuals who display behaviour problems are at greater risk of developing antisocial or delinquent behaviour (Pfeifer, Masten, Moore, Oswald, Mazziotta, Lacoboni & Dapretto, 2011:838). There is an increased risk of developing relationship problems not only with authority figures but also with peers and in intimate relationships, which may continue into adulthood.

Research shows that an increase in discipline problems in schools correlates with an increase in adolescents moving through the juvenile justice system and later as adults with an increased risk of criminal activity (Schwarz, 2011:3). This costs society not only in terms of monetary value but in terms of safety, health and time.

Thus, it can be said that discipline in schools plays an important role in a person's development (Mannheim, 2011:2; Morgan & Huebner, 2009:370; Herrenkohl et al. 2010:657).

### 5.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical investigation collected data in the form of questionnaires, focus group discussions and an interview. The empirical investigation highlighted four themes, the findings of which are discussed below.

### 5.3.1 POSSIBLE REASONS FOR MISBEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS

Five extrinsic factors were identified in the literature review as causative factors of behaviour problems. The extrinsic factors investigated (Figure 4.6) included the home environment (75%), school environment (69%), and the influence of peers (85%), the community (56%) and society (39%).

The survey indicated that 85 % of the participants felt that the influence of peers had a colossal impact on behaviour (Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.6), due to increased needs of acceptance (Keijsers et al. 2011:4; Laursen, Hafen, Kerr & Stattin, 2012:89). RCL participant 3 explained *“if my friends are not behaving, I’m not gonna behave either”*. The principal agreed *“adolescence is a stage of self-exploration, unfortunately you will to run into more people with bad morals and ideas that good ones”*.

Chepkilot and Kiprop (2011:272) identified the home environment as a very influential system; 75% of the learners agreed (Figure 4.6). RCL participant 1 explained *“kids who misbehave do so because of how they are taught and what they are shown at home, mostly from your parents”*. Learners agreed that the relationship between parents and children is very important. It was suggested by the principal that *“the quality of the parenting rather than the quantity”* plays a greater role with regards to learner behaviour.

Kimani (2013:17) identified educators as a causative factor within the school environment. Learners explained that the manner in which they are treated in a classroom has an enormous bearing on how they will behave in that class. The positive approach is based on the principle of reciprocated respect which requires good educator-learner relations (Samuels, 2010). RCL respondent 4 added *“it’s about the type of environment that a teacher creates, respect breeds respect”*. In the principal’s opinion an authentic educator is an effective educator, which is illustrated by a caring relationship.

This secondary school consists of a variety of learners with strong ties to their communities; the norms of these communities may influence behaviours (Martin & Loomis, 2013:333). The Grade 10 learners’ opinions appeared to be geographically and

culturally based. RCL participant 2 stated *“the people who live in Tokoza and Katlehong are different to the people who live in the suburbs because of the influence around them and their area.”*

Society determines what acceptable behaviour is (Ahmad, 2011:3). As the principal exclaimed *“when we have drugs in the school, we don’t grow dagga here ... it comes from the outside, from society!”*

RCL participant 4 said that the media makes it sound as if drugs and violence at schools are the norm. RCL participant 5 suggested *“the good child is not normal anymore”*.

The above-mentioned extrinsic factors have all been found to play a role in the behaviour problems that are manifesting at the secondary school. According to the Adlerian approach, these factors, if manipulated in the correct manner, could lead to better discipline practices within the school system, thus harbouring an atmosphere of learning (Dodge, 2011:63).

### 5.3.2 PERCEIVED EFFICIENCY OF THE CURRENT DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM

Within the Grade 10 participant group 71% were of the opinion that learner behaviour at the secondary school is acceptable; however, only 51% of the participants found that the discipline system itself was effective (Figure 4.7). The principal shared this opinion stating that *“the current discipline system is effective for ninety percent of the kids but for your more difficult learners it fails”*.

The RCL members raised concerns that the within the system there is no follow-up and that this leads to the breakdown of discipline. RCL participant 1 stated that these flaws allow for misbehaviour to go undetected. RCL respondent 3 echoed this saying *“you can get away with doing a lot of bad things”*. The learners are of the opinion that the system, if implemented uniformly, would be effective, but that human error has made it easy for learners to get by undetected.

The principal claimed if he had the resources his focus would be “*proactive rather than reactive*”. He described a more positive and learner-centred approach to dealing with indiscipline as the ideal, an approach that seems to be growing in favour amongst key role players in education (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010:17-21; Department of Basic Education, 2008).

### 5.3.3 PERCEIVED WEAKNESS OF THE CURRENT STRATEGIES USED IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The most common classroom management strategies used at the secondary school were identified and examined. Each strategy’s effectiveness was assessed and reported in Chapter 4.

Parental involvement was seen by the learners as the most effective strategy (Figure 4.8) used at this secondary school as supported by Manning and Bucher (2012:232-246). RCL respondent 2 claims that parental involvement is effective but it takes too long to get to that point “*I’ll do it ‘cause I know they [parents] won’t find out and that’s who I’m scared of.*” RCL participant 1 felt that the effectiveness of parental involvement was based on the calibre of parent, “*some parents don’t have time to get involved with the child and some parents maybe don’t care*”. The principal was of the same opinion, stating “*Without this [parental] support very little will change, parents must take responsibility*”.

Praise and reward and withdrawing privileges were found to be effective strategies (Figure 4.8). According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2012) learners need recognition and motivation from educators. RCL respondent 4 agrees “*just telling someone that you’re proud of them can do wonders*”. Withdrawing privileges only works if the reward or privilege is seen as such (Gilham, 2012:3). RCL respondent 1 added “*if I can’t play sport because I misbehaved, it will hit me; I really enjoyed it, so I’ll have to work harder to be able to participate again*”.

The RCL focus group felt that suspension was effective (Figure 4.8) mostly because parents are notified of the offence and not due to the exclusion. RCL respondent 1

explained *“the fact that now my parents are gonna find out what I did, it scares me, and now you realise wow, this is serious”*. Learners also pointed out that suspension loses its effectiveness when learners are suspended with their friends or are not under strict supervision.

Detention is one of the most commonly used strategies, yet only 67% of the respondents found it to be effective (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 4 claims *“Detention isn’t a scary or a bad thing.”* RCL respondent 5 explained *“if it’s after school you just gonna ditch”*. RCL respondent 2 explained *“if they make us do gardening or something.... You feel the impact, you won’t do that again, if you just gonna sit, it doesn’t bother me, I have an hour free, its fine...”*

According to Tungata (2006:30), Mestry and Khumalo (2012:106-108) and the current principal at the secondary school, the process of expulsion is quite lengthy and is only considered as a last resort. Of the Grade 10 respondents, 65% stated that expulsion is an effective measure (Figure 4.8), but the RCL respondents did not agree, stating that expulsion did not correct the behaviour it just moved the problem elsewhere. The RCL respondents agreed that expulsion may improve discipline in class, by scaring others into submission, but expelling a learner would not help him or her. The principal admitted that *“unfortunately the problems seem to follow those kids”*.

Reprimanding is immediate and if utilised correctly can be effective, however when used inappropriately its effects are short lived, hindering discipline further (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013:115). The Grade 10 respondents (50%) concur with these findings (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 4 explained *“It shouldn’t always be a screaming battle, teachers need to remain professional”*.

The system of demerits was seen as being ineffective to some degree by all parties (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 1 explained *“you can keep signing the diary and for some people it doesn’t matter”*. RCL respondent 4 echoed this stating *“they’re given out like sweets; it’s not something that’s taken seriously”*. Even the principal acknowledged *“the naughty kids don’t care”*. Demerits do enforce a system of record keeping, which is useful for disciplinary hearings (Moyo, Khewu & Bayaga, 2014:3).

It does appear that each of these strategies has its place and that no one strategy can be used to rectify every situation. These findings also suggest that it is not the strategy that is ineffective, but rather the implementation of the strategy.

#### 5.3.4 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS/STRENGTHS OF THE SYSTEM

The current discipline system is believed to be adequate for a majority of the school population, but it is ineffective in affecting change in the minority of learners who misbehave (Figure 4.7). The respondents ranked consequences (38%) as the number one aspect of the disciplinary system in need of revision (Figure 4.7). Others (36%) believed that the rules needed to be reviewed and 26% felt that the procedures should be reconsidered (Figure 4.9).

The learners suggested that the consequences for various offences be revised (Figure 4.9) to become more learner centred. Early parental involvement was encouraged with the focus of helping the learner with behavioural problems rather than punishing them. There appeared to be a lot of support for the learner-centred approach (Nelsen, 2011:11). RCL respondent 3 stated *“I think if the demerit system wasn’t about catching the child out, but more, ok, he made a mistake how are we going to work together to help him?”* it may be more effective.

When discussing classroom management and the effect of the educator on a class (Kimani, 2013:17), the RCL suggested that positive reinforcement would be more effective than reprimand (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 5 said that *“the more often a teacher shouts the less effective she is”*. RCL respondent 4 claimed *“talk to me and help me understand why I was wrong”*. RCL respondent 4 said that an educator should show *“genuine interest in you”* and be equal and fair in her praise or punishment.

Better and more consistent communication between school and home was suggested (Figure 4.8). RCL respondent 4 would like to ensure *“constant communication with parents, not only when things go wrong”*. RCL respondent 3 suggested an sms system for *“better communication with parents”*. It was suggested that if minor misdemeanours



such as incomplete homework received an sms, parental involvement would increase and learner behaviour would improve.

In reviewing the consequences, RCL respondent 3 explained *“you can get away with not doing your homework 20 times and nothing will happen, I think that’s a lot”*. The group agreed that learners need to be held accountable and that the more demerits accumulated the harsher consequences should be (Moyo et al. 2014:3).

RCL respondent 4 claimed *“it should be more than just one afternoon detention”*. With this in mind, it is suggested that perhaps to begin with, an educator should start with one break detention, then two and then an afternoon. As the number of demerits increases so the time spent in detention increases. It was also suggested by RCL respondent 2 *“they should make us do gardening or something”* and RCL respondent 5 added *“They should make you do like the dishes in the staffroom ... we all hate dishes!”*

It was said that if educators followed up as intended the procedures currently in place could be sufficient. RCL respondent 2 stated *“just following up makes a big difference”*. Variation among staff members’ implementation of various discipline strategies, as well as their lack of knowledge and ability to deal with behaviour challenges, had resulted in an ineffective discipline system riddled with inconsistencies.

## 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

### 5.4.1 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

One important distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is the role the researcher plays in the process. As such, it is imperative for researchers to consider their own biases, limitations and views, throughout data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the reporting phases of the process (Dodge, 2011:63). However, Dodge (2011:63) submitted that, *“one’s subjectivities could be seen as virtuous, for bias is the basis from which researchers make a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities, and joined to the data they have collected”*.

For this study, in the interest of full disclosure and of guarding against unethical or unintentional influences on the researcher's interpretation of how the adolescent learner perceives the discipline problems at a secondary school in Gauteng, the following discussion outlines the researcher's personal experiences relevant to this study.

The researcher was a learner at the secondary school between 1997 and 2001. The researcher then completed a learnership program at the school in question and continued to teach at the school for eleven years.

The researcher transferred to a primary school in 2013 to complete her qualification. The researcher believes that being a learner and an educator at the secondary school has given her insight into the discipline system employed at the school.

The researcher has been a part of many changes that the school has undergone, from change in management and sporting codes to renovations and curriculum changes. Understanding the challenges that school administrators, educators and learners face enhances the researcher's understanding of the frustrations experienced by indiscipline in schools. Although the researcher is not currently involved at the school, after giving so many years of service, the researcher does have a vested interest in the improvement and betterment of the school which may constitute a bias.

#### 5.4.2 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

There are limitations and delimitations to this study. This is a study of limited scope. The scope of this study is limited to research at only one school and therefore results should not be applied to similar contexts. The school in question was a multicultural, multiracial, co-ed, ex-model C, English mainstream school. These results may have been different if the study had focused on the responses of a single gender, culture or race which may influence one's perception.

Instead the study has focused on a diverse pool of respondents, in order to gain a general picture of the behaviour problems at this specific school. The results may also have been very different if more than one school had been investigated.

The questionnaire respondents were limited to the Grade 10 learners and the focus group sessions limited to the Representative Council of Learners. A larger sample including educators, executive staff, governing body, learners, and/or parents could have given additional insight into the overall perspective of the behaviour problems at this secondary school, by adding information according to their respective understanding.

The questionnaire was open to all Grade 10 learners. It was hoped that a variety of learners would participate. Due to the voluntary nature of the questionnaire certain groups may have excluded themselves, which may have skewed the results somewhat. Such groups may have included learners who do not have any vested interest in the well-being of the school or possibly learners who experience learning or behavioural challenges.

An additional limitation to the study proved to be the data collection process. Since information obtained during the interview and focus group sessions was largely dependent on the participants and what they were willing to share, the nature of their information was limited to their own perspectives and lived experiences. However, this study's triangulation of data helped to verify results, and helps to support the accuracy of the themes mined out of the interview transcripts (Dodge, 2011:64).

Having conducted research in only one school could be viewed as delimitation as the results are specific for the school and should not be generalised. Although a complete district perspective could be gained by collecting data from each individual school within a singular district, it is important to remember that one school may vary greatly from another. For this reason, speculation that this study's results would be similar to another school's should be discouraged (Dodge, 2011:64).

Another possible delimitation is the fact that the study focused solely on how the learners perceived the behaviour problems at the secondary school in Gauteng. A broader scope of questions and participants may have given more insight into other complex problems experienced by the school.

Additionally, the sample in this study was completely voluntary. It consisted of 70 learners and one principal who agreed to participate in the study. Data sources, which included the completion of questionnaires, focus group sessions, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and relevant document review, added to the narrow scope of the study.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this literature review and empirical study point to two main recommendations for addressing and improving the discipline system at a secondary school in Gauteng: namely improving extrinsic factors and improving the current discipline system.

### 5.5.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: IMPROVING EXTRINSIC FACTORS.

In general, collecting and reviewing appropriate information regarding a learner's environment can give school personnel foundational information, that could be used as a springboard to implement appropriate behaviour interventions and plans for learners (Dodge, 2011:65). The following strategies are recommended:

- 5.5.1.1 As a positive approach, organise workshops for parents to equip them with positive parenting strategies for dealing with adolescents. Give them a support structure whereby parent frustrations can be discussed and solutions shared (Manning & Bucher, 2012:232-246). Organisations which run effective workshops to help educators and parents to understand their children and equip them to become effective caregivers could be organised through the school ensuring that all role players have the same strategies for dealing with learners. This promotes continuity and consistency.
- 5.5.1.2 Keep parents informed and keep open lines of communication between parents and educators (Sprick, 2013:19). Systems like the 'school communicator'; the homework diary, sending letters and emails home are a good start, but as RCL respondent 3 stated "*parents don't read they just*

*sign*". Phone calls are effective but with the number of learners per class they are not always practical. For this reason more frequent meetings could be more effective. These meetings may be workshop or information based (5.5.1.1), which are more group orientated. Meetings may also be individual in nature focussing on a specific learner (Positive Parenting, 2013).

- 5.5.1.3 RCL respondent 3 introduced "*better communication with parents, like maybe a sms system*". The principal raised concern that "*sms becomes a little impersonal*". It was suggested that instead of using the homework diaries to record infringements and merits, minor infringements and merits be reported to parents via sms and recorded immediately on the main system making it effective and efficient. It was recommended that major misdemeanours are not reported in this way.
- 5.5.1.4 Involve parents in their children's schooling (South African Council for Educators, 2013:6). This may involve inviting parents to sporting events and fun days, hosting community projects and fundraisers, encouraging study groups, inviting parents to special assemblies or on the negative side; asking parents to accompany learners who cannot behave, to class.
- 5.5.1.5 Hargreaves et al. (2012:164) noted factors within the school environment which promote indiscipline in schools. The educator-learner relationship was stated as the top contributing factor followed closely by the educator's discipline style (Figure 4.2). A mentorship or intern program is recommended whereby educators are groomed and prepared before being deployed in a class on their own. This enables them to observe other more experienced educators and to become familiar with the school system and ethos.
- 5.5.1.6 Continuous professional development has become essential in order to ensure that educators are proficient (South African Council for Educators, 2008:12). It is recommended that educator development be encouraged and supported by the school, in the form of workshops and training for educators young and old.
- 5.5.1.7 Peers influence the type of behaviour learners participate in at school and elsewhere (Laursen et al. 2012:89). The members of the RCL stated that

peers influence both positive and negative behaviour but that the negative influence is more prominent in high schools.

Create an environment of success, whether it is academic, cultural or sporting in nature (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012). A possible way to do this is to promote extramural activities. RCL respondent 3 explained *“when you have to go for detention, that means you miss one hour of sports, if you miss practice you know fitness increases and all those harsh things increase”*.

5.5.1.8 The cultural mix of learners has to a certain extent made the school a community in itself, with its own norms, rules and values. If this can be harvested, the ‘culture’ of the secondary school can be used to instil common values. By involving families and communities in school events, a sense of unity and a positive identity can be created (Positive Parenting, 2013: Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

5.5.1.9 The principal commended Lead SA saying *“Lead SA I think is a very positive thing and I think we need more”*. Perhaps in the same manner as Lead SA the school could form their own committee of “Lead secondary school” which rewards learners for commendable acts and could even be spread to include neighbouring schools.

## 5.5.2 RECOMMENDATION 2: IMPROVING THE CURRENT DISCIPLINE SYSTEM.

5.5.2.1 There was much support for the positive approach to discipline both by the principal and learners. This approach was also supported by the South African Council for Educators in a conference held in March 2014. Within the current school system the focus on discipline should follow a positive approach, but insist that learners are still held accountable for their actions. This requires the establishment of educator-learner relationships based on mutual respect within a positive learning environment (Bowen, 2010:1).

- 5.5.2.2 According to this study, the most effective strategy to maintaining discipline was parental involvement (Figure 4.8). Learners felt that if their parents were aware of their actions that it would hinder poor behaviour. It is recommended that the seriousness of the offence determines the means of communication, for example, late for class – sms, disrespectful to educators – phone call, physical assault – parent meeting. It is further recommended that each misdemeanour is categorised and a uniform means to dealing with the infringement laid out.
- 5.5.2.3 Detentions were seen as quite a popular form of punishment but did not appear to be very effective (Figure 4.8) due to the poor management and organisation of the detention sessions. It is recommended that educators follow a uniform procedure for giving detentions and those activities such as sanding desks, are set for detentions. It is further recommended that parents be informed of detentions and that, if learners do not arrive at the scheduled detention, educators follow up with the parents and reschedule. Detentions should become longer in duration and intensity as they become more frequent.
- 5.5.2.4 Within the current discipline system it was found that the system itself was not problematic, but that the implementation of various strategies was not standardised, which had become problematic. It was explained that there was little clarity regarding the system and procedures taken amongst the learners. This should be rectified by having the entire discipline system explained in detail to all the educators, learners and their parents at the start of each year. This should clarify the rules, procedures and consequences that will be followed and sets the tone for the year.
- 5.5.2.5 The RCL members raised concerns that the within the system there is no follow up and that this leads to the breakdown of discipline. RCL respondent 3 explained “*you can get away with doing a lot of bad things*”. It is recommended that follow up procedures be put in place to ensure the smooth running of disciplinary actions.

5.5.2.6 It was suggested that the consequences for various infringements should become increasingly harsher and involve some sort of physical labour at personal inconvenience.

The findings of this study point to the following recommendations for addressing and improving the behaviour problems as perceived by the learners at a secondary school in Gauteng:

1. Greater parent involvement.
2. Further development of educators.
3. Creating a positive school identity.
4. Improved parent- educator communication.
5. Standardisation of discipline procedures.
6. Clarification of the discipline system to all involved.
7. Improved follow up procedures regarding learner discipline.

It is recommended that the school follow a more positive learning approach, whereby praise and reward, withdrawing privileges and greater parent involvement, were found to be the most effective discipline strategies.

## 5.6 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This research study attempted to increase understanding regarding the learners' perspectives of behaviour problems at a secondary school in Gauteng, in order to improve the current discipline system for learners. Previous research has focussed on the understanding of the behaviour problems from an educator's perspective. It is hoped that this research would help to merge the gap between these two perspectives.

The quantitative and qualitative methodology utilized in this study offered a detailed examination of the experiences of the learners at this secondary school and helped to describe the frustrations they experience with regards to the discipline system. Although



this study represents a starting point for developing a larger body of research on the topic of discipline in modern times, further research is necessary.

- 5.6.1 Future studies may focus more on the intrinsic factors that play a role as causative factors of behavioural problems. These factors were not the focus of this study and yet were mentioned by all groups of participants as factors to be considered, most notably that of temperament and specialised educational needs.
- 5.6.2 Another area of research to consider is the perspective of the “delinquent child”. Due to the voluntary nature of this study, these learners may have excluded themselves. Further research on their experiences as learners who have been through the disciplinary system a number of times, may shed light on the shortcomings of the system and offer a different view in which to improve.
- 5.6.3 A third area of research could be a look into the less traditional methods of disciplining learners. Perhaps a more explorative study into alternative strategies could be sought, rather than a focus on improving existing ones.
- 5.6.4 Another avenue to investigate would be the perspective of educators with regards to the discipline strategies post corporal punishment. The study could focus on alternative methods used to discipline learners and the effectiveness thereof.
- 5.6.5 Finally an extension of this study to other schools could be conducted. By repeating this study in various other schools reliability is increased and results can be generalised to schools with similar demographics.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation was to gain a deeper understanding into the learners’ perspective of the behaviour problems at a secondary school in Gauteng. This study provided insight into the causative factors regarding poor behaviour as well as the discipline system currently employed at the school.

The data collected from the questionnaires and focus group discussions have generated various ideas for improving the discipline system, for the benefit of all stakeholders. The positive approach to teaching and learning gained great support from learners and research indicates that it may be an approach worth implementing in schools.

The results of this study suggest that standardisation and follow up practices will lead to the improvement of the discipline system and learner behaviour in general. Improved communication with parents and greater parental involvement in schooling was emphasised throughout this study as a means to helping not only the discipline in school, but also the development of a well-balanced young adult.

The findings of this study have brought to light the necessity for change in our schools and have illustrated how learners need to be involved in these changes. It seems to the researcher that today's learners are entrusted with far more responsibility and independence, than of years gone by. If this is true, the researcher believes that one's approach to learners must too evolve if it is to be successful. Thus the researcher is of the opinion that a positive yet systematic approach should be used when dealing with learners.

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## APPENDIX I SCHOOL CLEARANCE

*Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

*BRACKENDOWNS*

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July 2012

The Principal

P.O.Box 167384

Brackendowns, 1454

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

Re: Request for permission to conduct research with high school learners

I, Miss De Atouguia, am currently studying towards my Masters Degree in Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling at the University of South Africa. This involves researching a current topic, problem or phenomenon within the schooling context. I request permission to conduct my research at your high school.

I propose a study regarding the learners' perception of the discipline system at High School. I feel that as we move forward, so too our systems need to advance and that a learners' perspective in this regard is imperative. I hope to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions that learners have regarding the current discipline system, its strengths and weaknesses and problems experienced so as to make practical suggestions for the improvement of the discipline system at the school and / or other schools.

I hope that the findings of this research will give a fresh perspective to the field of discipline and may provide practical examples of how to deal more effectively with troublesome learners. I think that a more effective discipline system will contribute to more effective teaching and learning as well as a safer environment. There is no foreseeable risk for the participant involved in this study, but if necessary debriefing will be available.

My sample for this field of study will include members of the current Representative Council of Learners as they have been selected by fellow learners to represent their views and the Grade 10 learners who have volunteered to take part, as Grade 10 learners have been a part of the system and have a vested interest in the change of this system. I feel that as a population these learners will be able to provide insightful opinions regarding the current discipline system and possible suggestions which may be implemented in the future.

Participation in this study is voluntary and each participant's individual views will remain anonymous. The participant may withdraw without penalty at any stage of the study, should they feel they no longer wish to continue. This study will involve the use of a questionnaire (Grade 10 learners and RCL), which will include open, closed and scaling questions related to the discipline system. Completion of the questionnaire should not take longer than an hour and will be completed in one sitting. The RCL will be involved in focus groups / interviews as well as the questionnaire which may require more than one session but at the most three sessions. For those who are interested in the findings a feedback session will be conducted on completion of the study.

The results of this study will form part of a dissertation of limited scope for the Master of Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling (UNISA) and will be submitted to UNISA, the Department of Education and the high school on completion.

I trust that you will kindly grant me the consent to conduct my research.

Sincerely,

Miss D De Atouguia

Supervisor:

Prof E Gouws

Unisa

[33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

[gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za](mailto:gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za)

# *Miss DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance and Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O Box 166678*

*Email: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

*Brackendowns*

*Alberton*

*1454*

I, [REDACTED], principal of the Secondary School under investigation, hereby give permission for Desiree De Atouguia to conduct her research entitled "The adolescents' perspectives of discipline problems at a Secondary School in Gauteng" at our School.

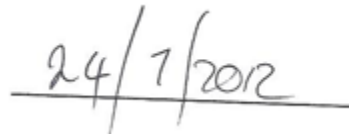
I understand that the focus of this study is on the current discipline system implemented at the school and that the participation of learners in this investigation is voluntary. I understand that the investigation will involve both our Grade 10 learners and members of the Representative Council of Learners with regards to interviews, questionnaires and focus groups and I am happy to assist Miss De Atouguia in this regard.

I have been informed of the participants' right to remain anonymous and their right to withdraw from the study without penalty. I am aware of the benefits and possible risks associated with such a study.

I understand that this study is in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Education with specialisation in school guidance and counselling and that the findings of this study will be made available to the relevant department of education, UNISA and the School.



Mr [REDACTED]



Date

## APPENDIX II CLEARANCE GDE



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:  
Reference no. D2013/199A

### GDE AMENDED RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	15 October 2012
Previous GDE Research Approval Letter:	D2013/199 dated 11 September 2012
Validity of Research Approval:	4 February 2013 to 27 September 2013
Name of Researcher:	De Atouguia D
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 166678
	Brackendowns
	Alberton
	1454
Telephone Number:	011 867 3589 / 082 884 3910
Fax Number:	011 867 3589
Email address:	33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Research Topic:	The adolescent's perspective of the discipline system at a secondary school in Gauteng
Number and type of schools:	ONE Secondary School
District/s/HO	Ekhuruleni South

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

*Making education a societal priority*

#### **Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research**

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506  
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

*Makhado*



## Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**DA De Atouguia [33955751]**

for a M Ed study entitled

The adolescents' perspective of discipline problems at a Secondary School in  
Gauteng

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa  
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two  
years from the date of issue.

Prof KP Dzvimbe  
Executive Dean : CEDU

Dr M. Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2014 FEB/33955751/MC

19 February 2014

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE TITLE WAS AMENDED AS RECOMMENDED IN THE  
EXAMINERS REPORT.

## APPENDIX IV      CODE OF CONDUCT

### CODE OF CONDUCT

The code of conduct is discussed in detail with all the learners at the beginning of each year.

#### Code of Conduct (Abridged)

#### **1. GENERAL**

- a) Disrespect to staff, learners, property or damaging the reputation of the school will be severely dealt with.
- b) Smoking is forbidden for all learners at all times.
- c) No learner may consume or be in possession of alcohol or drugs on the school premises.
- d) Abusive, foul, insolent and inflammatory language may not be used.
- e) Permission to leave school early will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Appointments should be avoided during school hours. Parents must show identification when collecting learners or give written permission if someone else is sent to collect their child – ID is still required.
- f) Theft is a most serious offence and is a matter which may be referred to the S.A. Police Services.
- g) Bullying, fighting, victimization, intimidation and any display of racism will be severely dealt with.
- h) No learner may bring to school, have on their person or use a dangerous weapon or an instrument that can be used as a dangerous weapon e.g. screw-driver.
- i) Discrimination on the grounds of race, gender or religion will not be tolerated.
- j) School starts at 7h40. Learners must be in assembly by then and not just on the premises.
- k) The school diary should be with each learner at all times. Absence of the diary results in detention on the same day.

#### **2. BEHAVIOUR**

##### **A. In the Classroom**

- i) Behavior in the class must be exemplary.
- ii) It is good manners to stand when speaking to an educator or any adult visitor to the school.

- iii) Learners will only be allowed to leave the classroom during lessons in exceptional cases.
- iv) No learner may leave the classroom without the permission of the educator. Must get written permission in the diary.
- v) Eating, drinking or chewing gum is not allowed in classrooms.
- vi) Litter must be placed in the bin provided.

**B) During change of periods:**

Learners may not go to the bathroom in between periods. Learners must move as fast as possible to the next class and take the shortest route.

**C) Assemblies:**

Learners must enter the hall or the science quad in a quiet and orderly manner. From 7h35 learners must line up in the science quad and by 7h40 there must be silence.

**D) On the school grounds:**

- i) Toilets must be kept neat and clean at all times.
- ii) Loitering in the toilets is prohibited.
- iii) Learners are not allowed visitors on the school grounds.
- iv) Learners must take litter with them when leaving. Bins will be placed close to the field to dispose of litter.

**3. ABSENTEEISM**

- a) If a learner is absent from school, he/she must on his/her return submit a written signed note, with contact number, from the parent/guardian to the Form Educator and the subject teacher if a test or assignment is missed. This letter must indicate the reason for the absence.
- b) If the learner is absent for 3 days or more, a doctor's certificate indicating the dates and duration of the absence must be submitted.
- c) If a learner is absent for an examination or cycle test, the parent/guardian must inform the school of this absence telephonically. Absence from any cycle test or examination requires a medical certificate from a medical practitioner, the hospital or clinic, or other acceptable proof countersigned by a member of the SMT. Where the authenticity of the candidate's claim is in doubt, the Principal

shall advise the Head of Department and investigate further. The learner will write the exam at the earliest convenient time for the educator when returning to school. The test/exam may be written in class time.

- d) Poor attendance without strong justification can disqualify any learner from writing examinations. Failure to complete a School Based Assessment (including any Practical Assessment Task) will disqualify a learner from writing the final exam.

#### **4. LATECOMERS**

- a) Names of learners who arrive late for school will be noted by the leaders and educators in charge. Persistent latecomers will be reported to the executive staff and will be allocated demerits and punishment
- b) Learners who arrive once classes have started must obtain a late note from the office or from the educator they were with.

#### **5. BOOKS**

- a) Books are provided on loan from the school.
- b) Any textbooks that are lost or damaged must be paid for by the learner/parent.

#### **6. TESTS, EXAMINATIONS, REPORTS AND HOMEWORK**

- a) Dishonesty or attempted dishonesty in any form will result in the learner concerned obtaining a zero mark for the test. In extreme circumstances, proven dishonesty can lead to exclusion from the school, after a disciplinary hearing and a recommendation to the HoD of the GDE.
- b) Homework will be given regularly and will also form part of the continuous assessment. Homework should be recorded in this homework diary and should be checked regularly by the parents.

#### **7. SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND GENERAL APPEARANCE**

- a) The official school uniform is compulsory.
- b) Should the uniform be temporarily incomplete, the learner must have **a covering note from his/her parent** and signed by a HoD at school.
- c) Where the appearance of a learner could bring the good name of the school into disrepute, parents will be asked to **remove the learner until the matter has been resolved.**



## **SCHOOL RULES REGARDING APPEARANCE**

### **UNIFORMS AND GENERAL APPEARANCE**

The official school uniform is compulsory. Should the uniform be temporarily incomplete, the learner must have a covering note from his/her parents. Where the appearance of a learner could bring the good name of the school into dispute, parents will be asked to remove the learner until the matter has been remedied.

**GOOD DISCIPLINE AND SELF RESPECT IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO PERSONAL APPEARANCE.**

We are a multicultural school; therefore, we have to deal with different types of hair. Apply the hair rules to suit your specific type of hair. Where variances/special permissions are granted, a note will be in stuck in the current diary. New notes need to be collected by learner each year. Any variances to the code of conduct due to medical or religious reasons need to be passed by the Governing Body. Where variances/special permissions are granted, a note will be in stuck in the current diary. New notes need to be collected by learner each year.

### **BOYS:**

#### **UNIFORM**

- Grey flannel pants (not tapered) worn with a black belt (plain buckle), short sleeve white open-neck school shirt with school badge.
- Black leather-type school shoes, no patent leather or suede. If shoes have laces, the laces must be tied properly at all times.
- Grey socks
- In winter, long sleeved white shirt, a tie, black school blazer (with school badge), school pullover or jersey can be worn. If the tie is worn, the wearing of the school blazer is compulsory.
- Only white, red or black scarves allowed with full winter uniform (i.e. with a tie and blazer)
- Only a plain white T-shirt is allowed under the shirt.
- No jewelry or trinkets are to be worn, as these will be confiscated.

## GIRLS:

### UNIFORM

- Black skirt (6 panel-A-line). THIS SKIRT IS NOT A HIPSTER. The style is designed to fit in the waist so that it can be comfortable and wider at the hem end.
- Length of the skirt; it is measured **four fingers above the knee**, when kneeling.
- White open-neck school shirt with school badge, tucked into skirt waistband, may be “bousoned” about 5 cm NOT to be pulled down to cover the skirt that is worn as a hipster.
- Black buckle or lace-up shoes with white ankle socks (fold over).
- School jersey or pullover is optional.
- In winter, white long sleeved shirt, a tie, black school blazer (with school badge), school pullover or jersey can be worn. If the tie is worn, the wearing of the school blazer is compulsory.
- In winter plain black opaque stockings are permissible (not thin black stockings)
- From 1 May until 1 September black slacks may be worn, but ONLY those obtain from the official supplier – NO STRETCH FABRIC or HIPSTER pants are allowed.
- The black blazer must be worn with the slacks at all times (tie underneath).
- Only white, red or black scarves allowed with winter uniform.
- Girls whose ears have been pierced may wear plain earring; one earring per ear only (sleepers or small plain gold or silver studs, no diamante or pearl earrings. The diameter may not be more than 3 mm)
- Jewelry such as eyebrow rings, tongue rings, nose studs, bracelets, chains etc. all of these are unacceptable and must be removed.
- Finger-nails must be cut short and no colored nail polish.

### HAIR

#### Girls:

- All Long hair must be tied back with ribbon so that both ears and eyebrows are visible. No adornments are allowed, only plain ribbon, elastic or Alice bands in school colors. No artificial flowers, bows or stones attached to the clips or Alice bands.
- The hair may not be colored so that it looks unnatural to an independent mediator, or so that two separate colors are visible. If it looks unnatural the learner will be required to dye it back to the normal color
- No dreadlocks, real or artificial
- Braids are to be tied up if below jaw-line. Braids are to be tied up at the back of the head. Braids are not to be fancy and outrageous.
- If hair is plaited, all hair must be plaited.
- No wigs allowed

- If the Afro style is longer than 7 cm, it must be tied up and not only brushed out.
- Any hair style (braids or own hair) is not to extend more than 7 cm beyond the head.
- Hair styles must be culturally sensitive and not make a fashion statement.
- Any hair style deemed unacceptable by the committee will be dealt with on an individual basis.

#### Boys:

- Sideburns may not extend more than ½ way down the ear.
- The hair may not extend past the top of the ear on the sides.
- The hair may not touch the shirt collar at the back.
- The hair may not touch the eyebrows.
- There may not be any steps, stripes, braids, dreadlocks, bangs or patterns cut or combed into the hair.
- The hair may not stand higher than 3 cm.
- The strands of hair may not be joined together to form spikes.
- The hair may not be styled to make any ridge e.g. running rooster, statue of liberty etc.
- The hair may not be colored so that it looks unnatural to an independent mediator, or so that two separate colors are visible.
- Hair should be blended, i.e. shorter at the bottom.

#### **RULES REGARDING “BLACK T-SHIRT AND JEANS DAYS”**

- Blue or black jeans (dark/faded/stone washed) with no accessories.
- Jeans must be below the knees
- If a belt is worn, it must be worn in the loops of the jeans
- Flat closed shoes or flat sandals.
- Official black school T-Shirt
- Any shirt worn underneath must not be visible.
- All school rules regarding jewelry, hair and make-up remain unchanged.
- If it is cold, the Red School Jersey may be worn or White for Matrics only. The Blazer may also be worn.

**VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR ON THE SCHOOL PREMISES OR IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOOL, APPLICABLE TO LEARNERS, ALL EMPLOYEES AND VISITORS (e.g. parents)**

Any learner guilty of any form of violent behavior such as:

- Being in possession of a dangerous weapon or an object that can be used as a weapon to inflict injury.
- Physically attacking somebody on the school premises or at a school event not on the premises, or any time the learner is in school uniform or associated with the school, with the intent of doing bodily harm.
- Bullying another learner through physical victimization, verbal and emotional abuse.

Will be suspended for period of 5 (five) days, to protect other learners and educators. During this suspension period the learner will be supervised by the parents/guardian. The parents of both the victim and the aggressor will be notified immediately of such an incident. The victim's parents will have the right to contact the SAPS and open an assault case in accordance with SAPS policy. Particulars of the aggressor and guardians will be made available to the SAPS.

In repeated cases of violent and or aggressive behavior, it will be a pre-requisite for the learner to attend anger management counselling. Proof of this counselling on an ongoing basis must be submitted. Failing this, the learner will NOT be allowed to come into contact with other learners.

## APPENDIX V INFORMATION SHEETS

***Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA***

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

*BRACKENDOWNS*

*Tel: (011) 868 1056 (Work)*

*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

### **Parent Information Sheet**

Dear Parent / Guardian

I, Miss De Atouguia, am currently studying towards my Masters Degree in Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling at the University of South Africa. This involves researching a current topic, problem or phenomenon within the schooling context.

I would like to include your child and his or her peers in a research project regarding the learners' perception of the discipline system at their high school. The purpose of this information sheet is first, to explain to you what my research entails and how it will involve your child and secondly, to request your permission for your child to participate in this project.

I feel that as we move forward, so too our systems need to advance and that a learner's perspective in this regard is valuable. I hope to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions that learners have regarding the current discipline system at their high school. I hope that the findings of this research will give a fresh perspective to the field of discipline and may provide practical examples of how to deal more effectively with troublesome learners. I think that a more effective discipline system will contribute to more effective teaching and learning as well as a safer environment.

My sample for this field of study includes members of the current Representative Counsel of Learners as they have been selected by fellow learners to represent their views, as well as

the Grade 10 learners who have volunteered to take participate. I feel that as a population these learners will be able to provide insightful opinions regarding the current discipline system and possible suggestions which may be implemented in the future.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. Only those children who have parental permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may withdraw at any time without penalty.

You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will not affect your child's status or grades in any way. Your child's individual views will remain anonymous and will not become a part of your child's school record. There is no foreseeable risk for the participant involved in this study, but if necessary debriefing will be available.

This study will involve the use of a questionnaire (Grade 10 learners and RCL members), which will include open, closed and scaling questions related to the discipline system. Completion of the questionnaire should not be longer than an hour and will be completed in one seating. The RCL members will be involved in focus groups as well as the questionnaire which may require more than one session but at the most three sessions. For those who are interested in the findings a feedback session will be conducted on completion of the study.

The results of this study will form part of a dissertation of limited scope for the Master of Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling (UNISA) and will be submitted to UNISA, the Department of Education and The High School on completion.

Please complete the attached consent form by indicating whether you do or do not grant permission for your child to participate in this project. Please sign and return the informed consent.

I look forward to working with your child. I think that my research will enable your child to voice his or her opinion and possibly make a positive contribution to the school's discipline system.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,

Miss D De Atouguia

Supervisor:

Prof E Gouws

[33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

[gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za](mailto:gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za)

*Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

*BRACKENDOWNS*

*Tel: (011) 868 1056 (Work)*

*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

### **Learner Information Sheet**

Dear Grade 10 Learner

I, Miss De Atouguia, am currently studying towards my Masters Degree in Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling at the University of South Africa. This involves researching a current topic, problem or phenomenon within the schooling context.

You are invited along with your peers to participate in a research project on the learners' perception of the discipline system at your High School. I feel that as we move forward, so too our systems need to advance and that your perspective in this regard is valuable.

I hope that the findings of this research will give a fresh perspective to the field of discipline and may provide practical examples of how to deal more effectively with troublesome learners. I think that a more effective discipline system will contribute to more effective teaching and learning as well as a safer environment. There is no foreseeable risk to you, the participant involved in this study, but if necessary debriefing will be available.

My sample for this field of study will include you, a volunteer from the Grade 10 group of learners currently at your high school as well as members of the current Representative Counsel of Learners. I feel that as a population you will be able to provide insightful opinions regarding the current discipline system and possible suggestions which may be implemented in the future.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your individual views will remain anonymous, you may withdraw without penalty at any stage of the study, should you feel you no longer wish to

continue. This study will involve the use of a questionnaire which will include open, closed and scaling questions related to the discipline system. Completion of the questionnaire should not be longer than an hour and will be completed in one seating. For those who are interested in the findings a feedback session will be conducted on completion of the study.

The results of this study will form part of a dissertation of limited scope for the Master of Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling (UNISA) and will be submitted to UNISA, the Department of Education and The High School on completion.

Please complete the attached informed consent form indicating whether you do or do not want to participate in this project and return it to me.

I look forward to working with you. I think that this research will give you an opportunity to voice your opinion and make a positive contribution to the discipline system.

Sincerely,

Miss D De Atouguia

[33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Supervisor:

Prof E Gouws

[gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za](mailto:gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za)



*Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

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*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

### **Representative Council of Learners Learner Information Sheet**

Dear RCL Member

I, Miss De Atouguia, am currently studying towards my Masters Degree in Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling at the University of South Africa. This involves researching a current topic, problem or phenomenon within the schooling context.

You are invited along with your peers to participate in a research project on the learners' perception of the discipline system at your high school. I feel that as we move forward, so too our systems need to advance and that your perspective in this regard is valuable.

I hope that the findings of this research will give a fresh perspective to the field of discipline and may provide practical examples of how to deal more effectively with troublesome learners. I think that a more effective discipline system will contribute to more effective teaching and learning as well as a safer environment. There is no foreseeable risk to you, the participant involved in this study, but if necessary debriefing will be available.

My sample for this field of study will include you and other members of the current Representative Council of Learners as you have been selected by fellow learners to represent their views. As well as the Grade 10 learners who have volunteered to take part. I

feel that as a population you will be able to provide insightful opinions regarding the current discipline system and possible suggestions which may be implemented in the future.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your individual views will remain anonymous, you may withdraw without penalty at any stage of the study, should you feel you no longer wish to continue. This study will involve the use of a questionnaire which will include open, closed and scaling questions related to the discipline system. Completion of the questionnaire should not be longer than an hour and will be completed in one seating. You and other RCL members will be involved in focus groups / interviews as well as the questionnaire which may require more than one session but at the most three sessions. For those who are interested in the findings a feedback session will be conducted on completion of the study.

The results of this study will form part of a dissertation of limited scope for the Master of Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling (UNISA) and will be submitted to UNISA, the Department of Education and The High School on completion.

Please complete the attached informed consent form indicating whether you do or do not want to participate in this project and return it to me.

I look forward to working with you. I think that this research will give you an opportunity to voice your opinion and make a positive contribution to the discipline system.

Sincerely,

Miss D De Atouguia

[33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Supervisor:

Prof E Gouws

[gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za](mailto:gouwsfe@unisa.ac.za)

APPENDIX VI      CONSENT

*Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa)   B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

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*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

**Parent Informed Consent Form for Learner Participation in Research Study.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (guardian's name), hereby give my permission,  
for my child \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to partake in a research  
study regarding the effectiveness of discipline at their High School.

I understand that this may include questioners, focus groups and interviews regarding the  
current discipline system at their high school. I have been informed of the aim, content,  
procedure and reporting of results involved in this study, as well as the possible benefits and  
risks involved. I understand that my child's involvement in this research project is voluntary and  
that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

\_\_\_\_\_

(Print) Learner Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

APPENDIX VII      ASSENT

**Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA**

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

*BRACKENDOWNS*

*Tel: (011) 868 1056 (Work)*

*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

**Learner Assent Form for Grade 10 Learner Participation in Research Study.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ do/do not (circle one) give my permission to participate in research project regarding the effectiveness of discipline at my High School.

I understand that this may include questioners, focus groups and interviews regarding the current discipline system at my High School. I have been informed of the aim, content, procedure and reporting of results involved in this study, as well as the possible benefits and risks involved.

I understand that my involvement in this research project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print) Learner Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Miss D. DE ATOUGUIA*

*Student in Psychology (HPCSA)*

*B Ed (Unisa) B Ed Hons (Guidance & Counselling) (Unisa)*

*P O BOX 166678*

*BRACKENDOWNS*

*Tel: (011) 868 1056 (Work)*

*ALBERTON 1454*

*e-mail: 33955751@mylife.unisa.ac.za*

**Representative Council of Learners Learner Assent Form for Participation in Research  
Study.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ do/do not (circle one) give my permission to participate in research project regarding the effectiveness of discipline at my High School.

I understand that this may include questioners, focus groups and interviews regarding the current discipline system at my High School. I have been informed of the aim, content, procedure and reporting of results involved in this study, as well as the possible benefits and risks involved.

I understand that my involvement in this research project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print) Learner Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Adolescents' Perspectives  
of  
Discipline Problems  
at a  
Secondary School in Gauteng  
  
Questionnaire

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Dear participant

Thank you for volunteering to partake in this study, your assistance is much appreciated.

This questionnaire investigates **LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS** of the current discipline system at your High school. The results of this study will form part of a dissertation of limited scope for the Master of Education with Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling (UNISA) and will be submitted to UNISA, The Department of Education and the High School on completion.

Although I have asked for your personal details, you will remain **ANONYMOUS**. Should you feel concerned in this regard, you may omit (leave out) your name, but please complete all the other personal details for classification purposes.

You will be required to answer **ALL** the questions in this booklet to the best of your ability. Please give as much detail as possible. This is an opinion based questionnaire and as such there is no right or wrong answer, I want **YOUR** opinion, so please try to be as honest as possible.

When answering the questions:

1. Please read the instructions carefully with regards to how to answer each question.
2. Please answer as honestly as you can with respect to your experiences and opinion.
3. Please try to answer all the questions.
4. Please write legibly in the spaces provided.

## **GLOSSARY**

The following terms are used in this questionnaire:

**Code of conduct:** A code of conduct is a collection of a number of binding rules and principles which reflect certain moral standards, ethics, principles, values and standards of conduct of the school.

**Detention:** a punishment which refers to the detaining of an individual for a specified amount of time. This may involve remaining behind after school or during breaks.

**Demerit system:** a system in which points or merits are deducted from a learner for inappropriate behaviour. Every learner starts off with a perfect record or score merits are taken away for every infraction and rewarded for good behaviour. Various infractions have a different point weighting.

**Disciplinary hearing:** For serious offenses a hearing is held to determine future consequences for the learner's behaviour and a plan of action for the learner. This usually includes the learner, their parents, the executive staff or disciplinary committee, Representative Council of Learners members and governing body members.

**Discipline:** the training of learners, by means of appropriate teaching, rules and procedures, in such a way as to promote orderly participation in education.

**Discipline System:** a system/ procedure/s used to promote the orderly participation of learners in education.

**Expulsion:** is the permanent removal of a learner from the school and is seen as a last resort in disciplinary action.

**Factors:** different circumstances which may influence a situation.

**Ignoring:** The tactical / purposeful ignoring of unwanted behaviour. Certain behaviours are not given any reactions or attention.

**Infringement:** to violate / break the agreed upon rules. I.e. when someone behaves in a manner that goes against the rules set out in the code of conduct.

**Misbehaviour / indiscipline:** the inappropriate (not acceptable) behaviour which interferes with the teaching and learning process which makes learning and effective instruction difficult e.g. when a learner breaks the school rules.



Parent involvement: whereby the school informs and/ or involves the learner's parents in the discipline of the learner at school. This may include phone calls to parents or meetings with parents.

Reinforcing positive: rewarding good behaviour instead of focusing on poor behaviour. E.g. praising learners who have improved their behaviour.

Reprimand: Where a learner's inappropriate behaviour is identified and corrected verbally by the teacher. This may include giving commands, calling a learner, making eye contact or giving signals to the learner to stop inappropriate behaviour.

Revoking privileges: Taking away privileges until behaviour is corrected.

Suspension: Suspension is the temporary exclusion of a learner from regular classroom activity. This mandatory leave of absence may be in school, where the learner is taken out of the classroom situation and is put under strict supervision in isolation, or out of school suspension, where the learner is not allowed onto the school property and is remanded to their parent's supervision

## PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:	
Surname:	
Gender:	
Age:	
Race:	
How are <b>YOU</b> disciplined at home? Describe methods used by your parents to discipline you.	

## SECTION A

1. If applicable, what do you feel are possible reasons for **YOUR** own misbehaviour at school?

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2. If applicable, under what conditions are **YOU** most likely to misbehave?
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Current literature gives various reasons for learner misbehaviour, some of which include the environments in which the learners are involved. Given below are various factors within these environments which may influence learner behaviour. Based on your experiences at your High School indicate whether **YOU** believe these factors are **REASONS** for misbehaviour amongst the High School learners.

For each subsection or statement **CIRCLE** the answer that **YOU** feel is most correct and then give a short statement **EXPLAINING** your choice. E.g.:

- 3.1.8. Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

Reason

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### 3.1 Home background:

- 3.1.1 Type of discipline at home:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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- 3.1.2 Parent child relationships:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.1.3 Family structure (single parents):

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.1.4 Working parents:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.1.5 Family conflict (marital / sibling):

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.1.6 Neglect:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.1.7 Exposure to inappropriate role models:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### **3.2 School:**

#### **3.2.1 Teacher learner relationship:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.2.2 Teacher's knowledge and experience in subject content:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.2.3 Teachers as role models:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.2.4 Teacher's style of discipline:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.2.5 Class size:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.2.6 School facilities:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### **3.3 Peers:**

#### **3.3.1 Need for status (to be popular):**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.3.2 Need to be accepted:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.3.3 Bad influences:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### **3.4 Community:**

#### **3.4.1 Area where you live:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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#### **3.4.2 Rules and norms of your community:**

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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3.4.3 Partaking in community events or projects:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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3.4.4 Socio-economic standing:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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3.4.5 Culture:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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3.4.6 Religion:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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**3.5 Society:**

3.5.1 Rules and norms of South African society:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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3.5.2 Race:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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### 3.5.3 Ethnicity:

Influences behaviour / does not influence behaviour

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4 Please state any **OTHER** possible factors that **YOU** think might influence the behaviour of learners at your High School.

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5 Different environments have been listed in the table below. Rank these environments from one (being the **MOST**) to five (being the **LEAST**) which **YOU** think influences learner behaviour.

	Home background
	Peers
	School environment
	Community
	Society

## SECTION B

The High School uses a system of demerits.

Minor infringements of the code of conduct are written in the homework diary and a predetermined amount of demerits subtracted for each one.

Repeat offences are punished with detention. If detentions are ineffective the learner is referred to a head of department and parent contact is made to determine future action.

Learners who have too many infringements recorded in their diaries (i.e. too many demerits) forfeit certain privileges such as casual days.

Serious offences do not follow the recording and detention route. These matters are referred straight to the head of department and parent contact is made.

In more serious cases a disciplinary hearing is called to determine the future of a learner at the school.



1. What do **YOU** think of the **BEHAVIOUR** of learners at your High School in general?

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2. Based on your experiences at High School, what is **YOUR** opinion on the **EFFECTIVENESS** of the discipline system at your High School?

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3. In **YOUR** opinion what are the **STRENGTHS** of the discipline system at your High School?

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4. In **YOUR** opinion what are the **WEAKNESSES** of the discipline system at your High School?

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5. In **YOUR** opinion how can the discipline system at your High School be **IMPROVED**?

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Various strategies have been used at High School to help correct learners' misbehaviour. For each strategy listed below state whether, in **YOUR** opinion, they are **EFFECTIVE** in promoting good behaviour.

For each subsection or statement **CIRCLE** the answer that **YOU** feel is most correct and then give a short statement **EXPLAINING** your choice. E.g.:

6.9. Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

Reason

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#### 6.1 Reprimand:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.2 Demerits:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.3 Detention:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.4 Parental involvement:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.5 Praise and reward:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.6 Suspension:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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#### 6.7 Withdrawing privileges:

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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### 6.8 Expulsion :

Effective in promoting good behaviour / ineffective in promoting good behaviour.

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7. State any **OTHER** strategies which in **YOUR** opinion may be **EFFECTIVE** in promoting good behaviour.

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8. **DESCRIBE** the atmosphere of a well-disciplined classroom.

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9. **HOW**, in **YOUR** opinion, does a teacher achieve good classroom discipline?

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10. In **YOUR** opinion what is the **BEST** strategy or combination of strategies to use to discipline learners at your High School?

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11. Different aspects of the discipline system are listed in the table below. Rank these aspects from one (being the **MOST**) to three (being the **LEAST**) which **YOU** feel need to be revised (assessed and modified).

	Rules
	Procedures
	Consequences / punishment

12. If **YOU** could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the **RULES**, what would you do differently?

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13.If **YOU** could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the **PROCEDURES**, what would you do differently?

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14.If **YOU** could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the **CONSEQUENCES / PUNISHMENT**, what would you do differently?

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15.Please state any **OTHER** suggestions or ideas that **YOU** may have to **IMPROVE** the discipline system at your High School.

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### SECTION C

1. How do **YOU** think indiscipline at your High School affects learners **ACADEMICALLY**?

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2. How do **YOU** think indiscipline at your High School affects learners **SOCIALLY**?

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3. How do **YOU** think indiscipline at your High School affects learners **EMOTIONALLY**?

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4. Please state any **OTHER** ways that **YOU** think indiscipline at your High School may **AFFECT** learners.

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Thank you for your participation.

# Focus Group Guides

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## **SECTION A: REASONS**

1. What do you feel are possible reasons for learner misbehaviour at school?  
(Discuss all possibilities).
2. Under what conditions do you think learners are most likely to misbehave?  
(Discuss all possibilities).
3. What factors do you feel influence learner behaviour? (Discuss amongst others the following factors in detail)

### **3.1 Home background:**

- 3.1.1 Type of discipline at home:
- 3.1.2 Parent child relationships:
- 3.1.3 Family structure (single parents):
- 3.1.4 Working parents:
- 3.1.5 Family conflict (marital / sibling):
- 3.1.6 Neglect:
- 3.1.7 Exposure to inappropriate role models:

### **3.2 School:**

- 3.2.1 Teacher learner relationship:
- 3.2.2 Teacher's knowledge and experience in subject content:
- 3.2.3 Teachers as role models:
- 3.2.4 Teacher's style of discipline:
- 3.2.5 Class size:
- 3.2.6 School facilities:

### **3.3 Peers:**

- 3.3.1 Need for status (to be popular):
- 3.3.2 Need to be accepted:
- 3.3.3 Bad influences:

### **3.4 Community:**

- 3.4.1 Area where you live:
- 3.4.2 Rules and norms of your community:
- 3.4.3 Partaking in community events or projects:
- 3.4.4 Socio-economic standing:
- 3.4.5 Culture:
- 3.4.6 Religion:

### **3.5 Society:**

- 3.5.1 Rules and norms of South African society:
- 3.5.2 Race:
- 3.5.3 Ethnicity:

- 4. Rank the factors discussed above in order of which influences learner behaviour more.

## **SECTION B: SYSTEM**

- 1. What do learners think of the behaviour of learners at your High School in general? (Discuss all ideas, good and bad points).
- 2. What do learners understand of the discipline system at your High School? (Describe the system and discuss misconceptions and contradictions).
- 3. How effective is the discipline system at your High School? (Effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses are explored).
- 4. In the learners opinion where does the discipline system at your High School need to be improved / revised? (Discuss all avenues).

5. What strategies have been used at your High School to help correct learners' misbehaviour? (Discuss amongst others, each strategy listed below, in terms of pros and cons, effectiveness and improvements).
  - 5.1 Reprimand:
  - 5.2 Demerits:
  - 5.3 Detention:
  - 5.4 Parental involvement:
  - 5.5 Praise and reward:
  - 5.6 Suspension:
  - 5.7 Withdrawing privileges:
  - 5.8 Expulsion:
6. Describe the atmosphere of a well-disciplined classroom. (Discuss examples of different types of classrooms and their characteristics).
7. How do you think a teacher could achieve good classroom discipline? (Discuss all combinations of strategies and suggestions).
8. If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the rules, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
9. If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the procedures, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
10. If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the consequences / punishment, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
11. Of the above mentioned factors, which would learners like to be addressed first? (Rank in order of importance).

## **SECTION C: AFFECTS**

1. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners academically?
2. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners socially?
3. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners emotionally?
4. Discuss any other effects of indiscipline on learners.

# Interview Guides

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## **SECTION A: REASONS**

1. What do you feel are possible reasons for learner misbehaviour at school? (Discuss all possibilities).
2. Under what conditions do you think learners are most likely to misbehave? (Discuss all possibilities).
3. What factors do you feel influence learner behaviour? (Discuss amongst others the following factors in detail)

### **3.1 Home background:**

- 3.1.1 Type of discipline at home:
- 3.1.2 Parent child relationships:
- 3.1.3 Family structure (single parents):
- 3.1.4 Working parents:
- 3.1.5 Family conflict (marital / sibling):
- 3.1.6 Neglect:
- 3.1.7 Exposure to inappropriate role models:

### **3.2 School:**

- 3.2.1 Teacher learner relationship:
- 3.2.2 Teacher's knowledge and experience in subject content:
- 3.2.3 Teachers as role models:
- 3.2.4 Teacher's style of discipline:
- 3.2.5 Class size:
- 3.2.6 School facilities:



### **3.3 Peers:**

- 3.3.1 Need for status (to be popular):
- 3.3.2 Need to be accepted:
- 3.3.3 Bad influences:

### **3.4 Community:**

- 3.4.1 Area where you live:
- 3.4.2 Rules and norms of your community:
- 3.4.3 Partaking in community events or projects:
- 3.4.4 Socio-economic standing:
- 3.4.5 Culture:
- 3.4.6 Religion:

### **3.5 Society:**

- 3.5.1 Rules and norms of South African society:
- 3.5.2 Race:
- 3.5.3 Ethnicity:

- 4 Rank the factors discussed above in order of which influences learner behaviour more.

## **SECTION B: SYSTEM**

- 1. What do learners think of the behaviour of learners at your High School in general? (Discuss all ideas, good and bad points).
- 2. What do learners understand of the discipline system at your High School? (Describe the system and discuss misconceptions and contradictions).
- 3. How effective is the discipline system at your High School? (Effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses are explored).
- 4. In the learners opinion where does the discipline system at your High School need to be improved / revised? (Discuss all avenues).

5. What strategies have been used at your High School to help correct learners' misbehaviour? (Discuss amongst others, each strategy listed below, in terms of pros and cons, effectiveness and improvements).
  - 5.1 Reprimand:
  - 5.2 Demerits:
  - 5.3 Detention:
  - 5.4 Parental involvement:
  - 5.5 Praise and reward:
  - 5.6 Suspension:
  - 5.7 Withdrawing privileges:
  - 5.8 Expulsion:
- 6 Describe the atmosphere of a well-disciplined classroom. (Discuss examples of different types of classrooms and their characteristics).
- 7 How do you think a teacher could achieve good classroom discipline? (Discuss all combinations of strategies and suggestions).
- 8 If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the rules, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
- 9 If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the procedures, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
- 10 If learners could change the discipline system at your High School in terms of the consequences / punishment, what would they do differently? (Discuss all suggestions).
- 11 Of the above mentioned factors, which would learners like to be addressed first? (Rank in order of importance).

## **SECTION C: AFFECTS**

1. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners academically?
2. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners socially?
3. How does indiscipline at your High School affect learners emotionally?
4. Discuss any other effects of indiscipline on learners.

## Discipline System

Our View

- What is a discipline system?
- How does our discipline system work?



## Our View of Our System

- What do we think of it?
- Do we understand it?
- Is it effective?
- Where can it be improved?
- What strategies have been used to help learners correct their behaviour?

## Discipline Strategies



## Recommendations

- What is a well disciplined class?
- How is it achieved?
- What would you change about the system?
  - Rules
  - Procedures
  - Consequences

## The Effect of Poor Discipline



**This is to certify that the research  
report**

**“ADOLESCENTS’ PERSPECTIVES OF  
DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AT A  
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN GAUTENG”**

**by:**

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**has been language edited**

**Signed:**  **Date: 2014-09-30**

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